

HUGUENOT FAMILY
OR
HELP IN THE TIME OF NEED

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Mrs
THE HUGUENOT FAMILY;

OR,

HELP IN TIME OF NEED.



Front.

The Return.—Eugene embracing his Mother.

P. 225.

THE HUGUENOT FAMILY;

OR,

HELP IN TIME OF NEED.

BY

CATHERINE D. BELL,

AUTHOR OF

"AN AUTUMN AT KARNFORD," "THE DOUGLAS FAMILY," ETC.



THE HUGUENOT FAMILY;

OR,

HELP IN TIME OF NEED.

BY

CATHERINE D. BELL,

AUTHOR OF "ALLEN AND HARRY," "MARGARET CECIL," "LILY GORDON,"
"HOPE CAMPBELL," "KENNETH AND HUGH," ETC. ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.



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God insured that it should never degenerate into such a gloominess as might have unseasonably depressed the spirit of his children and dependants.

The young Hubert de Beauchardis, his son, inheriting much of his father's disposition, and educated by him alone, felt the same cheerful acquiescence in the lot God had appointed him ; and it was therefore only natural that Marie, seeing both father and brother well contented to remain in obscurity, should give herself freely to the enjoyment of all the peace and happiness their quiet retired mode of life was calculated to afford.

This peace had little disturbance from outward troubles. As one of a persecuted and despised sect, the Marquis had trials and wrongs to endure, but these had never been aggravated by any more strictly personal grievance. Upon himself, as an individual, the hand of persecution had never yet alighted, and for this there were many good reasons. He had numerous relations high in rank and influence among the Roman Catholic nobility, and for their sakes considerable forbearance was shown to him. His own character and position also served in some measure as safeguards. Louis and his ministers were afraid to drive such a man to extremities. They were fully aware that his genius was of the highest order—his influence among his brethren almost unlimited—that if he chose to exert it, his power of doing them harm was incalculable, but that his devoted loyalty had hitherto led him always to use that power for the purpose of maintaining the king's authority, and the peace of the realm ; and they were therefore most unwilling to hazard any measure which might have the effect of destroying or weakening such useful loyalty.

Thus it was that Marie's life in her father's house had passed most peacefully and happily—nor had her married life been less bright. Theodore had been her father's ward; and, early left an orphan, he had been brought up by him as one of his own children. Marie had known and loved him nearly all her life, and although their natural dispositions were very unlike, yet their common education had produced such a similarity of tastes and habits as made them pleasant companions to each other. If there were less of principle in Theodore's contented acquiescence in the retired mode of life to which his religious creed condemned him, it was because the dreamy poetic cast of his mind, to which such retirement was most agreeable, rendered the exercise of such principle needless. This same tendency was another reason why Marie was so totally unprepared for the storm of persecution now ready to burst upon them. Devotedly attached to her husband, enjoying his constant society, seeing him perfectly happy in his varied scientific and literary studies, and in the lonely dreams his creative fancy was constantly presenting to him, and herself entering into and sharing in the brightness of these dreams, she had never cared to look abroad upon the real state of society around them, but had gone on quietly and happily to the very edge of the abyss which now yawned at her feet.

And now that the veil was removed from her eyes—now that she saw herself and all that she loved, upon the very point of being plunged into such a stormy sea of trouble, all fortitude forsook her. She had no power of hope left—she could only look helplessly and despairingly down upon the misery that seemed to be inevitable.

And yet it was not the mere suffering which Marie so greatly dreaded. It was her own want of power to endure it. She feared that she might be led to betray her Master's cause—this it was which had so utterly overwhelmed her, and it was from this danger that she looked so anxiously on all sides for deliverance.

"Theodore," she said, after a long silence, "why should we stay to meet all this sorrow and danger? Let us fly at once from this poor persecuted country. Better leave estate and country than deny our religion, than cast dishonour upon our Lord."

"No, Marie," he answered instantly and decidedly; "I cannot fly. I cannot forsake the post in which the Lord has placed me. I can never fly from what it has pleased Him to send upon me."

"But what good can we do by staying?" she urged.

"That we do not know, Marie. We cannot suppose that the king wishes to destroy all his Huguenot subjects. Let all stand firm, and he must cease his persecutions at some point. We do not know where that point may be, we do not know whose firmness may be the means of turning away the bitter sin of persecution from our dear France. Marie, what suffering would not such a reward be worth?"

"But our children, Theodore! What is to become of them, if we are taken from them? Have we any right to leave them to be brought up in a religion we believe to be false? Oh, Theodore! Eugène is nearly seven, and by the last decree seven is the age at which they may be permitted to abjure their religion.* Let us fly with him from all such danger before it be too late."

* See Lorimer's "History of the French Protestants."

For a moment Theodore's resolution seemed to waver, but only for a moment.

"Our children are the Lord's, Marie," he said fervently. "Let us do the Lord's will, and leave Him to care for them. We have given them to Him. Have you forgotten the day of Eugène's baptism? Have you forgotten how solemnly, and yet joyfully we felt, that we had given him to the Lord?"

No, Marie had not forgotten that day, with all its holy, happy feelings. And as the memory of it came over her, as she saw again the simple country church, the venerable pastor, the young father's face of solemn, deep feeling, and recollected all the happiness she had enjoyed then and since, the dread of denying the Lord who had so blessed her, returned with new force to bow her soul to the very dust in fear and misery.

After a long and silent struggle with her excessive agitation, Marie raised her head, and looked up to her husband for comfort and sympathy. But one glance at him told her that he was equally unconscious of her emotion and of her presence. His eyes were raised, fixed in dreamy abstraction upon a point in the ceiling, his lips moved as if in prayer, and an expression of enthusiasm, of happiness, and triumph lighted up his whole countenance. Marie would not disturb him with the expression of feelings so miserable, so opposed to his own. But, unable any longer to bear the fearful conflict in silence, she rose softly and stole out of the room.

Slowly and heavily she went up stairs, and along the gallery leading to her own room. For a few moments she paused at the door of her children's nursery. Never before had she passed that door without going in to

PREFACE.

I AM anxious that this Preface should be read, and as I know young readers, in general, do greatly dislike prefaces, I shall make mine as short as possible. In truth, a very short one is all that is necessary. I only wish to warn my young friends that, in this little story, they will find nothing like a history of the Huguenots, or of the persecutions they suffered. My object has been to awaken interest rather than to give information, to induce my readers to study the many excellent histories of the period, rather than to attempt to supply the place of such histories by a meagre one of my own.

When I was a young reader of history, in reading of any great national event, from the passage of the children of Israel through the Red Sea, down to the civil wars in our own dear country, I used to take great delight in picturing to myself the private life of families or individuals living in such times. Realizing that there must have been young people of all ages and ranks then as now, I amused myself by singling out one particular girl or boy about my own age and

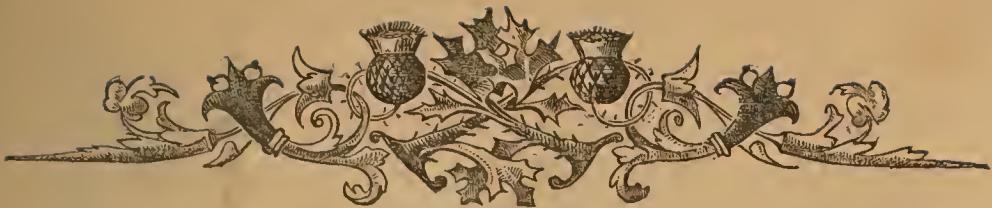
rank, and fancying how he or she would think, feel, or act under these circumstances.

And such occupation or amusement I found by no means unprofitable. It made the realities of history real to me. It induced me to combine scattered facts concerning manners and customs of life, so as to form one picture; and it deepened the feelings which the history of such events was calculated to excite.

Some such attempt I have here made for your benefit, by following one particular family through the trials and difficulties to which thousands of such families were in those times exposed. And my object in writing this little book is gained, if it awakens in your minds a greater interest in these persecuted children of God, a more realizing sense of what they had to endure, and did endure, for their Lord's sake, a desire to emulate their steadiness of principle and self-denial, and above all, a childlike trust in the God who so tenderly cared for, so powerfully protected them.

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THE HUGUENOT FAMILY.

CHAPTER I.

THE WARNING.



MARIE DE BLANCARD sat alone with her husband in her own little sitting-room. Although the smallest of the fine suite of public apartments in the château, it was the favourite of both husband and wife. In preparing for his marriage, Theodore had himself chosen this pretty little room to be set apart for his expected bride's special use, and had selected all the furniture and decorations, with loving careful reference to her well-known tastes. Here no stranger was ever permitted to enter. Here alone with her husband and children, or more precious still, alone with the God she had so early learned to know as her God, Marie had passed many of the happiest hours of her life. And there was not a corner of the room, not an article of furniture, not an ornament nor decoration, that had not pleasant associations connected with it, that did not call up bright memories of the happiness and peace that had been here enjoyed.

But far were all memories of peace and happiness from Marie now, as she sat by her husband's side. In-

tense pity, anxiety, alarm amounting even to terror, were now too plainly visible upon those features, which seemed fitted only to express such different emotions.

Nor was her husband less deeply, though somewhat differently, moved. Generous indignation, and haughty decision on his countenance, took the place of the compassion and fear painted on hers. And while Marie's hands trembled so much that she could not hold the letter they were reading, his grasp was so firm, so resolved, one might have fancied the frail paper would give way under his fingers.

And this same letter which so deeply affected them, was from Marie's father, the father they both so tenderly loved, whose letters hitherto had been so joyfully received, so carefully treasured up by both. But never before had a letter like this one come from that hand. It was written from Poitou, where he had lately been on business, and was written expressly to tell them of the sufferings endured and enduring by their brother Protestants in that province, and to warn them to prepare, lest such sufferings might soon be their lot.

It told of women and children driven forth to wander homeless and destitute, a sentence of death pronounced on any who should feed or shelter them. It told of the aged and infirm of both sexes forcibly deprived of sleep night after night, until life, reason, or constancy gave way under the agony inflicted. It told of parents forced to see their children tortured or murdered before their eyes, children their parents, husbands their wives, and wives their husbands. It told—— but Marie could read no more. A mist came over her eyes, and, with a shuddering groan, she hid her face on her husband's shoulder.

"Ah, Theodore," she cried, "if I am to see you or our children tortured, how shall I, how can I bear it? Shall I ever be able to endure? Ah, Theodore, if I were to deny the Lord!"

"Deny Him, Marie!" he answered quickly. "How could we? Deny the Lord who bought us with His own blood, who has blessed us all our life long! How could we deny Him? It is impossible."

Marie could not echo the "impossible." Faith, gratitude, love, seemed for the time dead within her. A sickening terror paralyzed every faculty of her soul. She could not hope, could not even pray.

The tale she had been reading was fearful enough in itself. But to Marie it came with the additional shock of surprise. She might have been more prepared for it. For many years, ay, for more years than she had lived, there had been systematically carried on a course of restriction and oppression towards the Huguenots. Without the formal revocation of the famous edict of Nantes, the rights and privileges it accorded them had been gradually curtailed and narrowed, now on this side, and now on that, until there was but little left to them of what had once seemed their inalienable right.

Of course, Marie had heard of all these acts of oppression, but as yet none of them had interfered much with her own individual happiness. She had still much of a child's disposition, to enjoy the present without care for the future, and that present had hitherto been very enjoyable for her.

True, her father, husband, and brother, were shut out from all the posts of honour to which their rank and character might have raised them had their creed been

different. True, to them was afforded no opportunity of gaining that distinction and fame, so dear to the heart of the old French nobility. True, that while they were doomed to a forced inactivity, they saw others, their inferiors in every way, winning laurels in the field or the cabinet; and with hearts filled with loyal devotion to king and country, they saw themselves absolutely prohibited from shewing that loyalty in any manner of service.

But ambition was not a feature of Marie's natural character, and had not been engrafted in it by either precept or example. Her father, the Marquis de Beau-chardis, was fully competent, by talents both natural and acquired, to fill any post his king could have conferred on him; but in his intense devotedness to his Heavenly Master's service, his entire submission to that Master's will, with serene and steadfast heart he accepted his exclusion from all honourable employment in the State as the appointment of a Father who loved him, and gave himself heartily to the duties of the private station to which he was reduced. Ambitious he was, but ambitious only to serve his Heavenly King, and to do good to his fellow-men. And that was an ambition which he believed, nay knew, could be as well gratified in retirement and obscurity, as amid the pomp and distinctions of court or camp. The prospects of his church, the sufferings of many of its members, and the knowledge that his beloved France sinned in thus gainsaying God's truth, and persecuting His servants—all this cast a sobering, saddening influence over his naturally gay temperament. But the gravity thus induced was deepened by no vain regrets concerning his own position; and his cheerful confidence in the wisdom and power of an overruling

feast her eyes and heart with the sight of her treasures. But now that she knew all that she might be called upon to suffer in them and by them, she felt that she could not bear to look upon them sleeping in all the unconscious security of childhood, and she fled hastily from the door, as if pursued by an unseen enemy.

When she had secured the door of her room she went up to the couch where she was accustomed to kneel in her daily devotions. Her body took the accustomed posture, but her heart refused to rise in prayer. She could not pray. At first she had been bowed down by the sense of her powerlessness to avoid sin. Now, as the consummation of her misery, came the conviction that the wish to do so was as far from her as the power. The very thought of her children had deprived her of all desire for the fortitude and constancy which might be the means of bringing down bitter suffering upon their innocent heads.

A few terrible moments followed, during which Marie struggled even fiercely to throw off this conviction, to persuade herself that at least she willed to do what was right, even though the power to perform it might not be hers. And then, as she was forced to see herself as she was, and felt herself borne helplessly along to a willing apostasy, she bowed herself to the very ground, and from the depths of her heart came forth the cry, "Lord, I am thine, save me!"

It was the despairing cry of one feeling herself swept relentlessly away by an overwhelming flood, and was called forth far more by the conviction that no other help remained than by the hope that from the Lord such help would be given. But faithless as

it was, even in the first moment of its utterance, it brought her a faint ray of light. And as again and again she repeated it, ever brighter and brighter grew the sense of that help which the Lord hath “laid upon One who is mighty,”—ever more and more clearly did she see the willingness of that mighty One to save,—and ever more and more confidently did she come to lay her soul, with all its burdens and sinfulness, into His hands. Once the fear suggested itself, “Perhaps I am not the Lord’s, and have no right to use the prayer.” But she would not entertain the doubt, would not even reason upon it. “If never Thine before,” she cried, “I come to Thee now, and Thou wilt receive me, if only for this reason, that without Thee I am lost.” And the very effort thus to cast herself anew upon His free grace, brought strength and healing to her soul. It was like setting anew her own seal to the covenant her Saviour offered to make with her. And as in that covenant all sin was on one side, all righteousness on the other, utter want and helplessness in her, almighty strength and all fulness of grace in Him, Marie felt that no depth of depravity, no perversity of her corrupt will, could annul her interest in it, but could only make it the more sure by making it the more necessary for her salvation.

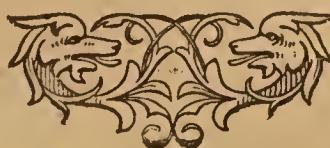
Long she sat upon the ground, her head resting on the couch, and her heart rejoicing in the contemplation of the glorious perfection of Him who was her Substitute, her Surety. What He was in His divine fulness He was for her; what she was in all her weakness and sin, she was for Him to save. “I am thine, Lord!” she said, while tears flowed down her cheeks. “Thine to be washed in Thy blood; thine to be clothed in Thy

righteousness ; thine to be sanctified by Thy Spirit ; thine to be watched over and cared for by Thy love. I am thine ! Thou mayest do with me what Thou seest fit. Thine ! Thy glory is concerned for my perfect salvation."

When at length she rose, and went to rejoin her husband, she felt weak and wearied, both in body and mind, from the fearful conflict she had passed through. But such weakness and weariedness was even grateful to her, now that her heart had found such a strong One on whom to lean.

She found Theodore as she had left him. His time had been spent far differently from hers. He had made no account of all the sorrows and temptations of the coming conflict. The triumph, the glory of victory, had alone filled his mind. Already were all the sufferings passed, and he saw himself standing before the throne of God, to hear His " Well done, good and faithful servant,"—to be received to dwell for ever with the Lord, for whom he had given up his life.

When Marie sat down again by his side, he made her a sharer in all his rapturous anticipations of future bliss, and Marie joined heart and soul in his joy ; only with her the first thought was : " And all this my Saviour has purchased for me ; this He has reserved for me,—me whom Himself keeps for it."



CHAPTER II.

PREPARATION.



LTHOUGH Marie had thus learned that all slavish dread of the coming trial would be dishonouring to the Lord, who had so emphatically said to her, "Fear not, I will help thee," she was yet thoroughly convinced that it was her imperative duty to prepare for it as far as was in her power. She felt that it was the Lord who, in His providence, had given her timely warning of what was before her, and that He could not mean that she should sit idly waiting for it, trusting to Him for grace to carry her through temptations, which her own seasonable exertions might have lessened. To strengthen the faith He had given by constant exercise in things both great and small; by constant watchfulness and prayer to keep open the way of access to her Father's throne; and by the zealous avoidance of every sin to keep herself in His presence, and in the light of His countenance,—were duties incumbent upon her at all times, and specially incumbent now. Duties, too, which in no way interfered with her entire dependence upon her Saviour, with her full conviction of her own helplessness.

In regard to her children, also, the present trial brought a special duty. If she had good reason to dread that they might soon be torn from her protection

and guidance, it certainly became her to see that this separation should do as little harm as possible. And looking forward to the time when they should be placed under the control and instruction of those who would labour to teach them false and pernicious doctrine, she felt strongly that it was her part now to imbue their minds with as much truth as they were capable of receiving. The consideration of their age, the eldest only seven, seeming to debar all hope that any instruction she could now give could effectually guard them from future false teaching; and the thought of the suffering to which her success might expose them, did for a short time induce Marie to waver in her resolution. But she was soon made to see, that neither discouragement nor fear had anything to do with her duty, that her part was to set about performing it, and to leave the rest to God.

And in the performance she shewed a wisdom and forethought we might hardly have expected from her. Like many of her countrywomen, Marie was naturally impulsive, and somewhat volatile; but like them, too, she had a quick, keen perception, and a ready ingenuity. She had hitherto lived a more childish, thoughtless life than beseemed her age and situation; but when once aroused to a full knowledge of that situation, she readily comprehended all her own duty, and quickly discerned the wisest and best mode of performing it.

It would have been worse than useless to attempt to instruct such young children in the controversy between the two religions. All she could hope to perform was to sow as much good seed as possible in their young minds, leaving it to the Lord to give the in-

crease, and to root out the tares she had too much reason to fear an enemy would try to plant in their stead.

Love to the Lord Jesus Christ, a realizing knowledge of His love, tenderness, and care for His own people, must be the best safeguard against the doctrines which in so many ways cast dishonour upon Him. A religion which forbids the use of the Bible must be distasteful to those who had learned to reverence it as God's word, to love it as His message to themselves, and had been accustomed to refer to it continually for guidance, comfort, and instruction. And to give her children such love and reverence, to train them to such habits, was now Marie's constant aim.

In this she sought the aid of example more than of precept. She had from early girlhood loved the Lord Jesus Christ as her Saviour, rejoiced in His presence, and sought communion with Him. But she now began to teach herself to manifest these feelings in such a way as to attract her children's attention, and awaken their sympathy. She had always looked to the Bible for guidance ; but she now was more careful to refer directly to it on all occasions as the one rule for action, the one instructor in all difficulties, the one comfort under all trials. While carefully and systematically instructing her little ones in the truths essential for their salvation, she did not weary them with long formal dissertations ; but she took care to bring the subject before them in the most pleasant and attractive way, rather as a daily and hourly source of happiness, than as a lesson to be learned at regular times, and then dismissed until its turn came round again.

In all her labour, Marie found a willing and able

assistant in her husband. All that was poetic and imaginative in his nature found full scope and enjoyment in the glories of revealed religion ; and he had a singular power of expressing clearly what he felt strongly, of awakening the enthusiasm of others to keep pace with his own. Less able, perhaps less anxious than Marie, to inform the intellect and guide the conduct of his children, he far surpassed her in the power of attracting their attention, and awakening their feelings. While Marie was training her little ones to walk as ever in the presence of a holy God, who, hating sin, had yet so loved sinners as to give His only begotten Son to die for them, Theodore was teaching them to discern and rejoice in all the beauty so abundantly poured into the works of His hands, and to adore that greatness and goodness which were equally displayed in His creation and preservation of the glorious stars over their head, and of the meanest insect under their foot. From their mother they learned to love the Lord Jesus Christ as an ever present friend, who loved them, and continually watched over and cared for them. From their father they learned to admire the lovely perfection of His character, the bright manifestation it gave forth of all that was good and beautiful. By the one they were accustomed to look upon the Bible as the lamp to their feet, and the light to their path ; as full of God's truth, and very precious from its revelation of God's exceeding love. By the other they were accustomed to regard it as the most beautiful and interesting of all books the world contained.

With Hortense the success of such teaching was very remarkable. She was a singularly thoughtful

child. Although healthy enough, she had never been very robust ; and lacking both spirit and energy for her brother's boisterous amusements, her greatest pleasure had ever been to sit quietly by the side of either father or mother, listening to the simple, touching Bible stories of the one, or to the glowing description of God's power and goodness from the other. But about this time Marie saw reason to hope that God had answered her prayers, and had given to the child, young as she was, the new heart, without which no interest in, no love for religious subjects, can be of any avail. And this was a hope which future years only strengthened.¹

Eugène was very different from his sister. He was a bold, high-spirited boy, generous and affectionate, but wild and thoughtless to a great degree. Two years older than Hortense, and with a mind of a higher order than hers, he was more capable of enjoying the beauty of language, thought, and feeling, all his father's instructions displayed ; more capable of connecting his mother's faith with her practice, and of admiring the consistency between them. His interest in, his liking for his parents' teaching, was therefore, as great as hers ; but with him it was mere interest, mere liking ; with Hortense it was an eager feeding upon that which was the life of her soul.

The opportunity for such teaching was lengthened out far beyond what the parents had ever dared to hope. That persecution, which had seemed at their very door, was in God's providence warded off for more than three years. Before the period 1681, at which my story began, Louis the Fourteenth had eagerly and hopefully begun a system of buying converts to the Roman

Catholic religion. Large sums were expended in donations and annuities to all who were base enough to exchange their faith for such commodities. And honour and favour to those Catholics who cared for such rewards, and money to the more mercenary, were freely poured forth on all who were the means of converting Protestants of any age, rank, or sex. Nor were vanity and avarice the only passions appealed to in such a cause. A fraudulent Protestant might escape the payment of his debts by changing his religion,—the law between Protestant creditor and Catholic debtor being such as to render almost hopeless any effort the former could make to obtain his dues. And a malicious man of either religion might obtain the fullest revenge upon his Protestant adversary by tempting his young children to admire the image of a saint, to look into the inside of a church, or in mere playfulness to imitate the sign of the cross; from any of which acts, nay, from a mere thoughtless or dictated wish to perform any one of them, the child's conversion to Roman Catholicism was proved in the eye of the law.*

At first the success of this new system of conversion surpassed the king's most sanguine hopes. But such success did not, indeed could not, last long. It was only the weak and faithless who were converted by such means. In a persecuted church, the number of such is never very large; and as it rapidly diminished from the large drafts made upon it, so the progress of conversion became proportionably slow. Louis, rendered more eager and impatient by the hope of victory so lately presented to him, no sooner became aware of this diminution of success, than he began to adopt

* See Lorimer's "History of the French Protestants."

other measures to supply the place of those whose success was beginning to appear doubtful. New and more severe restrictions were imposed. Their own schools and colleges had been destroyed ; and now no Catholic teacher was allowed to instruct Protestant children in anything beyond reading and writing. A Protestant was incapacitated from holding the office of tutor or guardian ; so that a Protestant parent at his death could see no hope of his children being educated in what he believed to be the only true religion. Most oppressive regulations were passed in regard to their public worship. It was made a crime to perform Protestant service in the presence of a single Roman Catholic ; and that a crime chargeable not only on the clergyman, but upon the congregation. And as there never could be any security that a concealed Catholic was not among them, this law had the effect, in many places, of causing the churches to be wholly deserted. Numerous pretexts were devised, by which it became lawful to enter and search a Protestant's house at any moment of the night and day ; and even the sick and dying were not free from the intrusion of priest and magistrate. In short, every measure was taken that could be invented to make the position of Protestant as intolerable as possible. Still the constancy of the Huguenots baffled the skill of their enemies to overcome. And then the power of more direct persecution was tried, and in 1681 began the terrible trial of the “dragonnades.”*

By this new system, large parties of soldiers were quartered upon the houses of the defenceless Protestants, and the lawless men were suffered, nay, encour-

* See Lorimer's “History of the French Protestants.”

aged, to use every cruelty they could invent to force their victims to apostasy. The name was supposed to arise from the fact, that the dragoons were most largely employed, and most relentless in the work. Of the sufferings thus caused I have given you a slight account, perhaps as full a one as the nature of this volume warrants. Those who desire a more complete history, I would refer to Weiss's "History of the Protestant Refugees," and Peyrot's "Histoire des Pasteurs du Désert," assuring them that both works will most amply repay the time spent in their careful perusal.

In 1681, the dragonnades were mostly confined to Poitou. Before they could extend further, various motives of self-interest induced Louis to suspend his persecuting work for the time. As the news of what their brethren were enduring spread among the Huguenots, a panic seized all classes, and an emigration, unparalleled in extent, was the immediate result. The noble left his château, the peasant his cottage, the manufacturer his works, the farmer his farm, and hastened to take refuge in other countries, where they were received with an eagerness that was in itself enough to teach Louis the loss he had sustained in their departure.

Such teaching was, however, hardly required. Louis was well aware that these hated Huguenots were his best and most profitable subjects. Brought up in the midst of jealous and watchful enemies, they had early acquired a self-control and self-denial, a circumspectness and orderliness of conduct, and a strict obedience to all laws,—by no means distinguishing features of their country, or of their age. Completely debarred from gaining either fame or fortune in political or military employments, they had turned their energies

to manufactures, commerce, and agriculture. And as even in these they were shut out from many privileges their fellow-countrymen enjoyed, they were forced to maintain an equality with them, by the exercise of greater perseverance and industry. These, and such-like causes operating for a number of years, had resulted in rendering the Huguenots eminent in every branch of trade. They were well known to be the most successful, the most ingenious, industrious, and orderly of all the subjects Louis reigned over, and the districts which they inhabited were better cultivated and more flourishing than any other in France. No wonder then that he viewed with uneasiness their flight from his own dominions to enrich other countries, by the manufactures, commerce, and agriculture they could no longer safely carry on in their own. No wonder that he paused in a course that threatened to depopulate the fairest part of his dominions. And when in aid of such considerations, came vehement remonstrances from Holland, England, and other Protestant countries, he yielded temporarily to their force, and the dragonnades were stopped for at least three years.

During these three years, therefore, our friends were suffered to carry on in peace that work of preparation they had begun so energetically, under the impression that their opportunity for it could not last above as many months, or even weeks.

In these three years Eugène and Hortense had come to an age better fitted to profit by their parents' instructions, Aimée had grown old enough to take her share as a learner, baby Marie had found peace and safety in the quiet churchyard, and another baby, Theodore, had come to take her place in the anxieties and cares of the father and mother.

CHAPTER III.

THE TRIAL.

N 1684 the storm burst forth again, and with redoubled fury. Large bodies of soldiers, set free by the late peace, were employed in the work, a work no longer confined to one district, but spreading over the whole of France, and carrying terror, desolation, misery wherever it went.

Marie watched the approach of the storm with becoming seriousness, having fully weighed the suffering it must bring to her and hers, but with calmness, her heart resting securely on the love and wisdom of that Lord who doeth according to His will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth.

Theodore's feeling was more one of restless, excited anticipation, like a warrior on the battle-field, impatient for the signal of attack. As rumour after rumour reached his ears, of the suffering of some, the constancy of others, and alas! the faithlessness of not a few, his spirit burned within him to take part in a struggle which was in his eyes only an opportunity of showing forth to men and angels the gratitude of a redeemed soul, an opportunity of enduring suffering for the sake of the Lord who had borne so much for him.

At first the blow was averted from them by the

same protection which had hitherto saved them from molestation. Their friends at court were too numerous and powerful to be rashly aggrieved, and ample time was granted to them to endeavour, by remonstrance and entreaty, to shake the constancy of both families of Beauchardis and Blancard. But when a constant firm negative was returned to all proposals and persuasion, even the warmest of their friends were convinced that further effort was useless, and that their obstinacy must be suffered to bear its own punishment.

At this crisis Marie again endeavoured to persuade her husband to emigrate for the sake of their children, if not for their own. But Theodore was firmly convinced that duty required him to remain at his post; and Marie, though she did not share his conscientious scruples, respected them too much to attempt by her entreaties to induce him to violate them.

Her father took a different view of the subject. In the very beginning of this outbreak he had sent his wife and unmarried daughter to Holland, and he himself only waited to complete the sale of his property, and to be rejoined by his son before he should follow them.

Hubert de Beauchardis had been for some time serving with the army. He shared all the devoted loyalty to king and country, which had ever distinguished his father. And although his profession of the Protestant faith debarred him from all hope of promotion, and condemned him to a rank far below his merits, he yet, on the first breaking out of the war, volunteered into the army, and served through the whole campaign with a zeal, courage, and skill, which were all the more admirable, in so far that they were perfectly disinterested. On the peace he returned to France. But regimental

duties detained him for some time, and he only joined his father in time to share the dungeon which rewarded their firm adherence to their principles.

Their imprisonment was the first shock the Blan-cards experienced. But it was soon followed by more personal suffering. A week or two after they had heard of it, -Marie and Theodore were one evening enjoying the beauty of their flowers on the terrace in front of the château, when the sudden appearance of a large party of dragoons announced that the moment of trial had arrived.

The soldiers rode up to the spot where Theodore stood, recklessly and rudely trampling down flowers and shrubs in their progress. Without dismounting, their leader presented the billet which gave a semblance of legality to their intrusion.

“Monsieur le Comte will find myself and men quarters and provisions, as therein commanded,” he said rudely.

Theodore took the paper with calm dignity, examined the signature of the magistrate of the district, and bowing his head with grave courtesy, said he should give them the best accommodation in his power. There was no trace of perturbation in his look or voice, and, except that she was deadly pale, Marie, standing by his side, looked equally composed.

The men were evidently annoyed by the manner of their reception. It flattered their sense of importance when their victims displayed either terror or useless anger. Here there was only a dignified assumption of the superiority belonging to their station, and which was the more provoking, in that there was nothing to find fault with, nothing to refute. To the leader of

the troop such a manner was peculiarly disagreeable. He was a fanatic in religion, looking upon the Huguenots as creatures of an inferior order to himself and to all good Catholics. He was further tinged with the republican spirit which in after years broke forth with such fury all over the kingdom, and nothing was more unpalatable to him than any assertion of superiority of rank or circumstances. In his irritation he at once cast off even the slight restraint he had imposed upon himself, and in a most insolent sarcastic tone observed, that he hoped M. le Comte was prepared to obey all other orders of the king as well as this one.

Monsieur le Comte hoped so too.

“ Well then, you will have the goodness to give immediate orders that the chapel adjoining the château may be prepared, and you, with Madame la Comtesse, your children, and servants, will repair thither, to hear mass performed by these reverend fathers,” pointing to the ecclesiastics in his train.

“ I must first be convinced that the king ever issued any such command, before I inform you of my intentions in regard to it,” answered the Count with the same immovable self-possession.

“ As to that, we have many modes of convincing the incredulous,” retorted the sergeant, with a brutal laugh.

His laugh was echoed by his troop.

“ Ay, ay, Gaspar,” cried one, “ we are pretty well accustomed to the work of convincing people against their will. A strong rope twisted round the elbows is not a bad way.”

“ A pan of burning coals to the soles of the feet, often proves an argument equally satisfactory to both parties,” suggested another.

"The loss of sleep for a few nights is a wonderful teacher of logic," said a third.

"Ah! we have many most successful methods of teaching that science. Only speak the word, Gaspar, and we shall begin at once," cried several, dismounting and forming a circle round the Count as they spoke.

He made no reply—he neither spoke nor moved, except that, as the men pressed more closely upon Marie, he threw his arm round her as if to shield her from their rudeness; a slight smile of scorn was the only sign that he had even heard their threats.

Before the sergeant could give any order, one of the priests beckoned hastily to him to come to his side. He obeyed the summons with evident reluctance.

"Take heed what you are about, my son," the other said in an eager whisper; "I have watched that man closely, I am accustomed to read countenances, and I can tell you that mere physical pain will be useless here."

"Ah! your reverence must pardon me," he answered, with his low cynical laugh, "if I say you are mistaken. That is a screw which, well tried on, seldom fails of effect. One only needs to know how far to go."

"I tell you," said the priest with increased vehemence, "you are wrong—you may torture that man to death, but never to abjuration."

"Well, well, it does not much matter,—be converted or die, is, I believe, pretty much the meaning of our gracious king's dealing with heretics, however he may disguise it under the honeyed words of anxiety for the man's salvation, and so on. If he does die of our physic, why, it is only one accursed heretic fewer in the world."

"But you ought to know by the orders you received

that in this particular case conversion would be far preferred to death."

"But you say that he is not a man to be converted," in an impatient tone.

"Not by pain of body, my son, but attack the heart," the other rejoined complacently, "you will find that vulnerable. The screw you speak of, tried on there, shall have less chance of killing, more chance of converting."

"I cannot pretend to understand your reverence," was Gaspar's sullen answer. He prided himself on his skill in such forcible conversions, and he did not approve of dictation or interference.

"Look at the Count now," said the priest eagerly, "see how his eyes flash as your fellows look somewhat boldly on his fair Countess. See how he draws her closer to his side, if one of them but advance a step or raise a finger. Can you see no way of trying his constancy through her?"

Gaspar laughed again his peculiar laugh of terrible exultation.

"Your reverence is right, the woman must be converted at any rate: better begin with her, and her example may be beneficial, even should our mode of instructing her fail of the desired result of convincing him."

"Example!" repeated the priest, as he watched Marie keenly. "No! you will get no example of that kind from her."

He had noted well her every movement and expression, the calmness of her pale countenance, her eyes looking quietly on the fierce, exulting faces round her, and now and then glancing up to the bright sky over-

head. He rightly interpreted the meaning of that glance, and although he called that enthusiasm which was faith, he yet did not fail to estimate correctly enough the influence, that the feeling, however named, must exercise upon her power to endure.

Gaspar's eyes had followed the direction of his companion's. He, too, watched Marie for a minute in silence ere he answered.

"Ay, ay, she does look rather a difficult subject; but the more difficult, the better suited to play the part we design her in the Count's conversion. He could, perhaps, stand a short trial even where she was the sufferer. The longer she makes it, the more sure we shall be of succeeding in the end."

Their deliberations were here interrupted; the children had been preparing to join their father and mother on the terrace at the very moment the dragoons came up. The servants, too well understanding the nature of the visit, had kept them within doors, while they anxiously watched the scene from one of the windows. But at this instant Eugène, by a sudden spring, freeing himself from the hands of the man who detained him, darted across the hall and out on the terrace.

At a signal from the priest, Gaspar seized him as he would have passed on to his mother's side.

"Try your screw with him, while I watch the parents' looks," said the other, in a low significant tone.

"Stand still, you little rebel and heretic," cried Gaspar, dealing the boy a cruel blow on the face, as he struggled to get free.

Eugène uttered no cry of pain, but looking up with flashing eyes in the man's face, he said boldly, "I am

neither rebel nor heretic, and who are you that dare strike me?"

"Dare indeed! I shall soon teach you that. Hark ye, young jackanapes, kneel down this moment at that reverend father's feet, and swear to be a good Catholic from this day and for ever."

"I shall not," said Eugène, in a loud firm voice; "I was born a Huguenot, and a Huguenot I shall die!"

"Die then!" cried the man, as he lifted him up, placed him on his own horse, so that Marie and Theodore could fully see his position and his danger, and, holding him on with one hand, presented a pistol to his head with the other.

Still Eugène uttered no cry, made no useless effort to escape. Although all colour fled from cheek and lip, he yet gazed unshrinkingly at the pistol for two or three seconds before he turned what he believed was his last look upon his father and mother. Then, and not till then, the large tears filled his eyes, and rolled slowly down his cheeks.

Marie bore this scene the best. Her own feelings were swallowed up in intense sympathy for the others. As she clung to her husband, she gave more support than she received, and in spite of the natural horror she felt at the thought of witnessing her own child's murder, she forced herself to look steadily towards him, that he might to the very end have the consolation of meeting her eyes, and reading her love and sympathy in them. She even tried to speak words of comfort; but that was an effort beyond her strength—her lips moved, but no sound came forth.

When he first saw his boy in the grasp of the ruffian Gaspar, Theodore had made a frantic effort to go to his

rescue, but foiled by the crossed pikes of the men round him, he had covered his eyes with his hand, that he might at least shut out the sight of what was to follow. He could not shut out the loud, fierce “Die then!” that accompanied the presenting of the pistol; and as he heard it, his head fell on his chest, his whole body bent forward, he seemed on the point of falling to the ground. After some moments, however, he recovered his composure a little; gradually he raised himself again to his full height, and although he kept his head turned away, he uncovered his eyes, and his countenance resumed its expression of stern determination, mixed with a certain degree of contempt for his persecutors.

Father Joseph had watched intently—he now turned to Gaspar, saying decidedly, “It is enough, we see which way the wind blows—set the boy free.”

Gaspar made a significant motion of his forefinger towards the trigger of the pistol, and looked up inquiringly as if to ask if that was the setting free his companion meant.

“No, no,” the priest said quickly, “they have nerved themselves to bear the boy’s death. It would only harden them now; we are on the right track, Gaspar, only we must see that the trial be protracted enough; a short one, however severe, will not do the business; set down the boy, and let him go.”

Gaspar obeyed, and Eugène sprang forward to his mother. At a sign from their leader, the men suffered him to pass, and sobbing and weeping now, like the very child he was, he threw himself into her arms. Still the keen eyes of Father Joseph held their vigilant watch, and as he saw Marie’s eyes, hitherto so tearless, overflow, her hands hitherto so rigid, tremble even in

their grasp of her rescued child, he remarked complacently, “ We have done some good by that stroke—we have unnerved them for the strife that is to follow.”

And he was right ; the unexpected relief from alarm had unnerved both parents more than the alarm itself. And in so far as their power to endure lay in their own strength, bodily or mental, that power was lessened by what they had undergone. It is true that Marie, leaning on the arm of One who is Almighty, was, in her greatest weakness, strong in His strength. But that was a matter Father Joseph could hardly be expected to understand, and it was therefore with unmixed satisfaction that he turned to discuss with Gaspar the best mode of proceeding in plans so promising. In this discussion the other ecclesiastic joined.

Father Joseph suggested, and the others concurred, that it would be best to leave parents and children alone for the rest of that night. “ Shut them up together,” he said, “ in a room in the château. A whole night of suspense, the presence, the terrors, ay, even in such circumstances the caresses of the children, must certainly shake the father’s constancy.”

This agreed to, Gaspar, with some of his men, went to the château to make the required arrangements. In a short time he returned, and conducted his victims to the prison prepared for them.

The room chosen for this purpose was a long gloomy hall in the lower part of the château. It had not been used for years, except that on stated occasions the dependants of the family were assembled here to receive their dole of food and clothing. The only furniture was a long table, some rude wooden stools, and a truckle bed which Gaspar had caused his men to bring in from

one of the servant's rooms. The gloom and discomfort of the place had been its recommendation to the man's choice.

Here, beside their other children, Theodore and Marie found their faithful old bonne, Marguerite. Fondly attached to her young charge, ignorant, somewhat weak in intellect, and thinking only how they might be saved from pain and sorrow,—Father Joseph had easily discerned that she might prove an auxiliary to their cause, and had directed that she should be shut up with her master and mistress.

Baby was in her arms, he was not yet weaned, and was crying bitterly for his accustomed food. As soon as the door was closed upon them, Marie hastened to take him and give him what he craved. She sat down for that purpose under one of the windows at the far end of the room, and bending over the treasure she had never expected again to embrace, feeding her eyes and heart with the infantile grace and beauty she had never expected again to see, she was too much absorbed to notice the re-opening of the door, and the entrance of Gaspar and Father Joseph, in their passage through the room to a door in the end at which she sat.

A kind of chuckle from the brutal Gaspar was the first intimation she had of their presence. Looking hastily up she saw them standing before her, regarding with triumphant smiles the manifestations of her love. A sharp pang shot through her heart at the sight. Instinctively she felt what these smiles portended; and as she clasped her baby tighter in her arms, and drew away even the skirt of his little robe from the risk of contamination in touching them, she grew cold and faint at the thought of what was to follow. For the

present her fears were groundless. The men passed on, and Marie was able to breathe more freely, to look round upon her other children, and to give them the comfort they required.

It was summer, and although the evening was far advanced, and the windows were few, narrow, and placed high in the wall, yet there was light enough to allow her only too easily to read the grief and consternation painted on the pale young faces, lifted so beseechingly to hers, appealing for help and protection she was powerless to give. Struggling bravely against the tremors, which every now and then shook her whole frame, and striving to call back their usual cheerfulness to her looks and tones, she soothed and comforted by caresses and words of affection. In her own simple way she spoke to them of the love and care of their Father in heaven ; told them that she felt assuredly that not one of these fierce men could lift a finger against them without that Father's permission ; that it was in very love, and because He knew it to be best for them, that He had suffered this sorrow to come ; that in the midst of it all His eye was ever upon them, He knew exactly what they felt, and His heart was full of love and pity for them all. She reminded them of what the Lord Jesus Christ had done and suffered, that He might redeem them to Himself ; and encouraged them to believe, that He who had bought them at such a price, would never leave nor forsake them. Theodore listened to her, but with a gloomy brow ; her words reached only his ears, the comfort they contained did not revive his heart as it did hers. Seeing this, she, with the wisdom of love, applied to him for assistance in her work, and her device succeeded. He sat down by her side, and

with the little girls nestling in his arms, Eugène leaning on his mother's shoulder, and the baby sleeping peacefully on her knee, he began to repeat such passages as he knew were familiar to the little ones, and as were suited to give them the comfort they required.

He gave them first that Psalm of comfort, the 23d ; and, as each word was slowly pronounced in his deep, manly voice, the good and loving Shepherd seemed to each one of the party to be very near. Then followed such passages as Isaiah xl. 11,—“ He shall feed his flock like a shepherd ; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.” Isaiah lxiii. 9,—“ In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them : in his love and in his pity he redeemed them, and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old.” Deuteronomy xxxii. 11, 12,—“ As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings ; so the Lord alone did lead him.” And Psalm xxxiv. 7, 15,—“ The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry.”

Never before had their parents exercised such power over the hearts of their young ones as on this night ; never before had their instructions been so precious to them. Out in the bright sunshine, among their birds and flowers, they had liked to think of God's care and love, and had rejoiced in the consciousness of His presence. But a thousandfold more precious were

such thoughts and consciousness now, in that dark, dreary place, where they were no longer mere accessories to an enjoyment sufficiently great in itself, but rather the only rest and stay for their trembling, wearied spirits, the one haven of peace and safety from the tempestuous ocean of dread and sorrow.

"I am not afraid, now that God is beside me," lisped little Aimée, resting her head on the breast of that earthly father, whose love was to her such a realizing type of what the Father in heaven felt for her.

"And Jesus Christ knows all about how sorry and frightened we are. He sees how dark and uncomfortable this room is, so different from our own nice nursery, and He is very sorry for us. I like to know that," said Hortense.

"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want," Eugène repeated thoughtfully. "Shall not, shall never want. The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, His ears are open to their cry. But," with a shade of sadness and doubt, "it is the righteous."

"Righteous in Christ's righteousness," said his mother quickly, speaking to his thoughts even more than his words. "You know what that means, my darling boy."

"He hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him," Eugène repeated with an emphasis which made the mother's heart leap for joy, even in that moment of trial.

Thus some time passed peacefully away. But night came on. The stone floor of the room was damp and cold. The windows were not glazed, being mere loopholes in the wall. The weather was stormy, and, con-

sidering the time of year, might even be called cold ; and the wind blew in through these openings, with a chillness which their light summer dresses were ill calculated to resist. The little ones shivered with cold, and complained of hunger, and the poor parents could neither get them warmth nor food, all their entreaties to that effect having been churlishly denied.

Marguerite, so far from being a help to them, added to their cares, exciting vague fears in the children's minds by her frequent exclamations, that she saw, felt, or heard something near her in the darkness, and bewildering them more by her weeping entreaties to her master and mistress, that they would not sacrifice themselves and their children for nothing, but yield obedience to their jailers in what was a mere form.

To silence her, and to soothe the little girls, Marie tried to sing one of their favourite hymns. But at the first trembling notes, the sentinel at the door came in, and harshly commanded silence, threatening, if the offence were repeated, that he would take away the children, and lock them up in a room by themselves. Such a threat was equally terrible to parents and children, and henceforth they trembled even to whisper to each other.

But, happily, young hearts and young bodies cannot be kept long awake even by suffering. Sleep soon began to weigh down the eyelids heavy with tears, and to bring her own kindly forgetfulness to the wearied, fearful spirits. They could not be laid down in comfortable postures to rest, for there was no covering to spread over them, and the warmth their father could impart was all too necessary. But broken as their

slumbers might be from such a cause, it was yet a relief to both themselves and their anxious parents.

Marguerite's trying babble was also hushed by the same kind friend. Her fears, real and imaginary, and her ceremonious respect for her master and mistress, caused her, for a little, to resist its approach. But gradually her head nodded forward until it found rest on the table, and for some hours the only disturbance she caused them was the very slight one of her loud snoring.

Eugène alone remained to share his parents' sad watch. Marie was perplexed how to dispose of him for the night. The soldiers had brought in a truckle bed. But that was only to serve their own purpose, and they had taken care to leave behind all the coverings which might have added to the comfort of the poor prisoners. Marie feared to allow her delicately nurtured boy to fall asleep without some means of preserving the warmth of his body. While she was anxiously turning the matter over in her mind, she was startled by Eugène's abrupt question—

“Mamma, are you afraid?”

“Not at all afraid that anything can happen to me without the will of my loving Father in heaven,” was the prompt reply.

“And were you not afraid when you saw the pistol at my head?”

A strong shudder at the remembrance came over her, but she answered firmly, passing her arm tenderly around him, “Afraid that I should never again hold my boy in my arms, but not at all afraid that God had forgotten to take care of us, or did not see what was happening to us.”

"And if I had died then, do you think, mamma, that I should ever have seen you again? Do you think I should have gone to heaven?" he asked, in a low smothered tone.

Again she shivered violently, as if struck with sudden pain.

"My darling," she said, "that is a question for you to answer—I cannot."

There was a pause, and then the answer came slow and decided: "No, mamma, I should not."

"And are you content it should be so?" she asked solemnly.

"No, mamma; but what can I do? You have told me that God must punish sin. I know I am a sinful boy. I never knew it before—never understood it all before; but I do now."

"'He hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him,'" Marie repeated, slowly and emphatically.

"And is that enough, mamma, to save even me?" he asked breathlessly.

"Ah! is it not enough, my son?" was her earnest answer. "If Christ have borne the punishment of your sins, the faithful and just God will certainly forgive them all,—blot them all out of His sight. If Christ give you His perfect righteousness to be counted as yours, must not you be lovely and acceptable in God's sight? What more can you want?"

"Nothing!" he exclaimed joyfully. "Oh, mamma, I see it all now; I ought to have seen it before. But, mamma, I think God has made me see it now, because He knows how sorrowful we are here in this dark dreary place, and He wishes to give us something to

make us happy. I am not afraid now, mamma. And since Christ Jesus is beside us all, I think I can very easily go to sleep. I am weary." And he laid his head on her shoulder.

She looked anxiously up at him. The moon had risen, and as now and then the wildly driving clouds were parted, she shone into the dreary room, so that they could see each other's faces. By that pale light the boy's face looked wan and worn, and Marie felt equally afraid to keep him awake the whole night, and to allow him to fall asleep without protection from the cold.

Theodore saw her perplexity, and advised her to lie down beside him on the bed, when they could give each other warmth.

She hesitated. How could she leave her husband to sit alone in that gloomy place? And how could he support the fatigue of keeping the two girls in his arms all night?

"Ah! suffer me to have them," he said gloomily. "Who knows how long I may have the privilege of holding them in my arms!"

Marie did not remonstrate; but the sadness of his tones only confirmed her in the resolution not to leave him alone. And profiting by the transient moonlight, she set at once about making arrangements for the comfort of all. The bed was too narrow to hold more than two; but, by lying across it, she believed they might all be accommodated. She made Eugène lie down, and placed a stool in front for his feet to rest upon. She placed her sleeping baby beside him, put two stools for her own place, and three a little further down for her husband.

"Now," she said, with an attempt at cheerfulness, "see how comfortably I have managed. If I am not a stool's breadth taller than Eugène, you are more than that taller than me; so that I am sure I have calculated very fairly. Do try it—to please me, do."

And he was unable to resist her pleading; but having laid down his two charges, he took his place beside them.

For some hours the children slept quietly, but not the parents; their hearts were too full for sleep. To Marie's surprise, it was gratitude and joy that occupied the greater part of her thoughts;—gratitude for the special manifestation of His love and presence her Saviour had blessed her with; and gratitude, O how fervent! for His gracious dealings with her hitherto careless boy.

"I am not afraid; no, I am not afraid," she thought. "The Lord has the charge of us all; of what can I be afraid?"

The texture of Theodore's thoughts was more varied. Yielding to the sway of his vivid imagination, the quick alternations of brilliant sunshine and gloomy darkness which passed over his mind, were very different from the resting faith of hers, and far less fitted to strengthen him for the coming conflict.

Soon after daylight appeared Gaspar, and Father Joseph, with several other soldiers, came in. Theodore and Marie rose hastily at the first sound of their footsteps approaching the door, and stood looking anxiously at all their children, as if asking by means of which one among them the next trial was to come. They were not left long in suspense. Gaspar rudely snatched the baby from Marie's arms. The other children, still

half asleep, were with equal rudeness raised from the bed, Marie thrown upon it, and her feet made fast to the bar at the bottom; while two men seized Theodore, tied his arms behind his back, and bound him on one of the stools, in such a position as that he could easily see all the sufferings of wife and child. They were then told by Gaspar, that the little Theodore's life was in their hands; that not one morsel of food should pass his lips until they had declared their intention of obeying the king, by renouncing their abominable heresy, and, in token of their sincerity, had consented to hear mass, and had made the sign of the holy cross.

Silence was the parents' only response; the agony of their hearts was too great for speech. But, ah! who can tell what that agony was,—doomed to sit by helpless, while the child they loved better than their lives perished before their eyes of that cruel death—starvation. I cannot describe it—cannot even imagine it; and, if I could, I am very sure my young readers could not bear to hear it.

Marie's only resource was in prayer,—in a constant committing and recommitting of herself, and of all she loved, into the hands of her loving Saviour,—a constant looking up to the Lord, under whose wings she had come to trust. Ah! how often did that cry of agony go up from her heart, “Save, Lord, or I perish.” How often was the precious answer, “Fear not, I am with thee,”—as a tower of strength into which her sorely tried soul fled for refuge, and was safe. Had not God enabled her thus to relieve her overburdened heart by prayer, her reason, or her life itself, must have given way in the intensity of anguish she endured.

Father Joseph did not molest her much with his conversation. As we know, he had early been convinced that she was to prove no favourable subject for his proselytizing labours. He confined his efforts to the Count. Sitting down beside him, he endeavoured first to gain his attention and favour by expressing the warmest sympathy and compassion for him, before he began any more direct aiming at the desired result of his conversion. Even when he did proceed further, it was with the utmost caution and moderation. He did not attempt argument ; he even seemed to take it for granted that the Count's creed was as good as his own ; but he painted in lively colours the king's obstinate adherence to his purposes, the absolute power of the hardened, reckless men, in whose hands the whole family now were ;—represented that the forms required of them were mere forms, and hinted at the practicability of retaining their present opinions, even while doing their duty to the king, by obeying his orders in such mere outward matters. Although he received no answer from the Count, yet observing the expression of gloom and depression on his countenance, he saw little ground of discouragement in his silence ; and could he have penetrated into his thoughts, he might have seen still less. Poor Theodore was utterly cast down. He could neither think nor pray. His whole mind was filled by but one thought, and that was the misery his Marie must be enduring. Upon this his imagination dwelt continually,—representing, with terrible vividness, every feeling or association that could aggravate it, and even exaggerating its amount, in so far, that no account was made of the presence of that God who has called Himself the God of all comfort ;

who, in fulfilment of His own promises, was with her in the fire, watching over its heat; suiting His supply of grace to every moment's need, and making her feel His everlasting arms underneath her.

And so the time passed heavily on. The other children had been taken away, because Eugène and Hortense had tried to comfort their parents and each other by repeating texts of Scripture and verses of hymns; and Gaspar had perceived that such words, coming from such lips, had a wonderful power to revive and refresh the spirits of the father and mother. Twice in the course of each day food was brought in, and they were forced to partake of it,—their guards being equally anxious to preserve their capacity to suffer, and to weaken their strength to endure. This, with the occasional changing of their guards, was all that broke in upon the monotony of suffering, as the soft, low tones of the priest, the mocking, often blasphemous speeches of the soldiers, were the only interruption to the heart-rending cries of the poor baby.

But such a scene is too painful to dwell upon. The end is drawing near. For hours the baby's cries have been rapidly getting feebler, and now, for some minutes, they have wholly ceased. Marie believes all is over. She has closed her eyes, and is trying to thank God for her darling's release, when she is aroused by a moan exceeding faint, exceeding piteous, at her very ear. She starts up. The soldier who is holding the child has brought him to her side, that she may see his dying agonies. She stretches out her arms imploringly, begging to have him for a moment, only one moment. The man draws him back just out of her reach.

" You can have him whenever you like," he says,

"have him for altogether, if you will only do as you are bid. Come now, one little sign of the cross, and all is over. He is yours for ever, to do what you please with."

"Do make it, lady," urged another soldier, more tender-hearted than his fellows. He was a father. "Do make it, and save his life. There is yet time. Or allow me to make it for you. That can be no sin." And he came eagerly up to the bed.

This device had succeeded with many a poor mother, driven mad by the sight of sufferings she could not alleviate, and which she would have given her own life to prevent. But Marie, strong in a strength not her own, could not be so overcome. She gently drew back her head from his outstretched finger, and with a look of gratitude for his pity, turned again to her baby.

Suddenly his whole frame was convulsed, his chest heaved fearfully, his eye-balls turned up in the sockets, his arms were thrown out, as if in a last appeal for help. Marie gave a piercing scream, and endeavoured to spring out of bed. The shackles at her feet prevented her. Her strength could hold out no longer. She fell back fainting on the mattress.

The swoon was very long. Those around sometimes feared it was to death. Once or twice there was a slight fluttering of the pulse, a slight quivering of the eye-lids, but more than half an hour passed before she became at all sensible of what was passing around her.

When she did recover consciousness, the whole scene was changed. She was on a sofa in one of the saloons. Her husband bent over her, holding a glass of cordial to her lips. The little girls knelt weeping and sobbing at her feet. At first, all seemed a fearful dream.

"Is anything wrong? Where is baby?" She asked.

"Here, in Marguerite's arms," was Theodore's hesitating reply.

It awoke her at once to the consciousness that all the past was too real. A false temporary strength was lent her by the depth of her anxiety; and, springing up, she hastened to him. He lay on Marguerite's knee.

"See, see," the poor bonne cried exultingly. "All will yet be well. He has swallowed that last mouthful. Do not fear, Madame,—if he can only swallow, he must soon get round again."

Alas, poor mother! you are not deceived as Marguerite is. You can read the words "too late," written on every feature of that poor, wasted face. Never more shall that dry throat be able to swallow. Already the few drops of milk Marguerite had forced into his mouth, are slowly oozing out through his closed gums.

Marie took him in her arms, and hung over him in speechless, tearless agony. Never more shall those sunken eyes brighten at her approach. Never more shall those parched lips meet her own in sweet, laughing kisses. Never more shall those stiff, cold hands clasp her neck, smooth her cheek, or play with her hair. Already another convulsion fit has seized the little frame. Marguerite and the father turn away. They cannot look upon his agony. It is almost too much for even a mother's fortitude to bear. But the struggle is short. The fit has passed away, and life has passed away with it.

Marie closed his eyes, composed the poor, con-

torted limbs, pressed her lips in a long lingering kiss on his forehead, and then with her usual self-forgetfulness, gave him to Marguerite, while she turned to comfort her husband, whose agonized groan had reached her ear, even while listening for her murdered darling's last sigh.

She knelt down beside the sofa upon which he had thrown himself, took his hand in both her own, and laying her face close to his on the pillow, she whispered softly—

“ His sorrow and pain are all over now, dearest Theodore. He is in the Saviour’s arms, and nothing can ever hurt him more.”

He made no answer, except by a deep groan, and moved impatiently away from her, as if fretted at the very thought of comfort.

“ You do not grudge his going a little before us, when he has gone to be so happy, to be for ever with the Lord?” she asked in a feeble tone. Her lately recovered strength was fast melting away.

“ But I do grudge him,” he cried fiercely, starting up into a sitting posture. “ When I have paid such a terrible price for his life. When I have abjured the faith, denied my Lord, sold my own soul that he might live.”

A pang shot through Marie’s heart, more severe than any she had yet endured. A sickness as of death came over her. A blinding mist rose before her eyes. The ground seemed to sink away under her. She clung tremblingly, desperately to her husband, while she tried to say, “ No, no, you did not, you could not.” But the words died on her lips, even as the hope in their truth faded from her heart.

Theodore, in the depth of his own misery, seemed

unconscious of hers, and went on in the same fierce tone.

“ You cannot be surprised to hear this. How did you suppose you had been suffered to come here? How did you think he had been allowed to die in your arms? You could not fancy these miscreants could have had mercy or pity? That would have been a bright fancy indeed ! ” And he laughed a laugh most appalling in its bitterness, and unsuitableness to time and circumstance.

Marie did not hear it. Unconsciousness had again come to her relief. Her grasp relaxed, she sank gently on the floor.

With the strength and calmness of despair he raised her, and laid her on the sofa. He was beginning, with Marguerite’s help, to apply the remedies that had before been successful, when the door opened softly, and Father Joseph looked in.

“ Are you ready, my son ? ” he asked in his low soft tones.

“ No, I am not,” was the decided reply. “ See, the news of my worthy doings has killed my wife. Do you expect me to leave her till life is at least quite gone ? ”

The priest came up, felt Marie’s pulse, held his hand a moment before her lips.

“ The swoon is not so severe as the last,” he said. “ She is beginning to revive already. This good woman can do all that is necessary. And, indeed, my son, we can delay no longer. These soldiers are so fierce, so relentless, I cannot answer for the consequences if you keep them waiting even another minute.”

It was an implied, if not a direct lie. The soldiers

were then more than a mile from the château, as he very well knew. When Theodore followed him into the ante-room, there was no one there except two or three monks hastily summoned from a neighbouring monastery, to bear a part in the performance of solemn mass in the chapel.

But Theodore was quite unconscious of the deceit. He observed nothing, saw nothing. He had obeyed the priest's summons, because he believed his presence would give his wife more pain than pleasure when consciousness returned. He followed Father Joseph mechanically to the chapel. Mechanically he obeyed the instructions of the monk stationed by his side, to direct him ; rose up, sat down, stood, and knelt without the least thought of what he did ;—the one fearful consciousness that he had ruined his soul by his apostasy, pressing like a dull, dead weight on heart and brain, and shutting out every other idea or feeling.



CHAPTER IV.

THE DELIVERER.

ES, it was even so. He had apostatized. His constancy had been terribly tried, terribly shaken, during the last few hours of his baby's sufferings. And when he saw his Marie fall back, apparently dying, it gave way altogether.

"Set me free, let me go to her, and I will make the sign of the cross when you please," he cried breathless with eagerness to get to her side.

"And go to mass, my son?" gently insinuated the priest.

"Go anywhere, do anything, everything! Only let me go to her."

And instantly his bonds were cut. He was set free. A passing glance shewed him that the little Theodore was still alive. And in a voice of imperious authority he commanded, that the bonne should be summoned, and the child given into her charge. In this also prompt obedience was accorded.

He seized Marie's death-cold hand, kissed her passionately again and again, calling on her to look up, and speak to him. But there was no movement, no sign of life.

"Wretches, you have killed her, and shall answer

for it with your own lives," he cried frantically, springing upon one of the soldiers near him.

Father Joseph interfered.

"Not so, not so, my son, she lives, and will do well. This is only a swoon," he said. "I understand medicine, and can soon restore her."

At these words the Count at once loosed his fierce grasp, and turned again to the bed with eager hope, but still Marie lay motionless, apparently not breathing.

"She can never recover in this place," he exclaimed impatiently. "Call my servants. Let her be instantly carried into another room."

"No, indeed," Gaspar said very coolly. "Although you have come to your senses, we have no evidence that she has. Each man stands upon his own merits. Your obedience cannot avail her."

"It cannot? Well then, I instantly retract it. I swear that to the latest day of my life I shall never——" The words were hastily interrupted by Father Joseph.

"Patience, patience, my son," he said, "all shall yet be as you wish;" and drawing Gaspar aside, he remonstrated with him warmly on the danger of refusing compliance.

The Count's conversion, he urged, was far more desired by the king than his death. In his present state of feeling, to drive him to extremities was the sure way to lose all hold over him. Unless he openly proclaimed his adherence to the Catholic faith, they should not obtain the large reward offered for his conversion. Let them once get that great point accomplished, by the use of gentle means, which would alone avail, and they could deal with the lady at a future time.

Avarice was less the besetting sin of Gaspar than of the priest. Fanatical devotion to his religion was his governing motive. And it was doubtful if Father Joseph could have prevailed, had not a third person appeared on the scene, namely, the officer who commanded the troops now at the château.

*In billeting the soldiers engaged in the dragonnades especial care was generally taken to separate the men from the officers, in order that the gentler feelings and habits of the one might be no restraint upon the coarse violence and cruelty of the others. In this case such an arrangement was more peculiarly called for, as the Baron de Raynal was peculiarly unfitted to take part in such scenes,—young, brave, talented, and generous, the commission now intrusted to him was not more revolting to his feelings than humbling to his pride. He had made every effort to evade it, and would have openly refused compliance had he dared. In these times, however, it was no light thing to incur the imputation of being favourable to the Huguenots, and such imputation was particularly hazardous to a man like the Baron, thirsting for an opportunity of distinguishing himself, and sustained by no high principle. On arriving at the scene of action, it had been a great relief to him to find that a merely passive part had been assigned to him. And he entered eagerly into every amusement the neighbourhood afforded, in order to banish even the thought of the tragedy enacting near him. Nor was success difficult, for the question at issue was utterly uninteresting to him. More infidel than Catholic, he had not the least sympathy with the persecutors, and only so much with the persecuted as unjust oppression

* Historical.

must awaken in every generous breast. Intent upon keeping himself ignorant of every detail, he had not even taken his share in the preliminary business of arranging the billets for the different parties of men; but affecting indisposition, he had left it altogether to his subordinate officers. In this way he had avoided hearing even the names of the places to which they were sent, or of the victims given up to their mercy. His own quarters were fixed in a town at a considerable distance, and he heard little or no mention of the business in the gay circles among which he moved. One and another conversion were reported to him, and he knew that his men had moved from one to another post. But as each removal only carried them farther from him, he gave himself no concern about the matter, and asked no questions. Nor was it necessary he should. His interference was not required, was not wished for. And it was a well-understood thing in all such transactions, that the men were to remain until their business was well done, and then to rejoin their leader without summons.

On the morning of the day on which little Theodore died, the Baron was engaged in a hunting expedition with some of the neighbouring gentlemen, when one of the party happened to allude to the “glorious work of conversion” going on near them, and the De Blancards were named as among the sufferers. The intelligence fell upon him like a thunder-bolt. His childhood and youth had been passed in the immediate neighbourhood of Beauchardis. In spite of difference of creed, he had been intimate with the family, had been much attached to Hubert and Theodore, while Marie he had passionately loved. The consideration that she belonged to a

persecuted and despised sect had been insufficient to restrain him from suing for her hand, insufficient to console him for the pain of being refused. He had left the country immediately, had been on foreign service ever since, had not seen Marie again, had not heard her name mentioned, and yet her image was as fresh as ever in his mind; no fair one, however charming, had been able to take her place in his heart. To soften his disappointment, he had at the time been told of Marie's engagement. But he had either never heard, or had quite forgotten in what part of the country Theodore's property lay. So that up to this moment he had not even dreamt of the possibility of being near her.

"Who was Madame de Blancard?" he asked eagerly; a faint hope remaining that he might be mistaken, that the fear which had driven all colour from his cheek might prove groundless.

"Ah! there indeed you puzzle me," answered his companion, shrugging his shoulders. "I keep no register of the births, marriages, or deaths of such despicable cattle as these Huguenots."

Hardly hearing him to the end, the Baron turned his horse's head and galloped back to the rear of the party, to put the same question to his host, who rode there. This time he was more successful. The Count de Mercœur knew all about the Blancards. It was their present situation which took from him all interest in his favourite amusement, and made him lag behind so dull and listless. He confirmed De Raynal's worst fears.

"She was a De Beauchardis, and is one of the sweetest, gentlest, fairest creatures in the world," he said feel-

ingly. “But,” as he saw the Baron gather up his reins, settle himself in his seat for a gallop, and turn his horse in the direction from whence they had come, “What is the matter? Where are you going?”

“To save her!” was the short answer; and, setting spurs to his horse, he would have ridden on, had not the Count, at great risk both to himself and the young man, caught the bridle, and checked the horse in his first bound forward.

“Friend, what is it you would do?” he said earnestly. “Do you know how dangerous it is to interfere in such matters? It may cost you rank, the king’s favour, everything you most prize, and do her not the least good.”

“Sooner would I lose life itself than that one hair of her head should be injured,” he answered vehemently; and, taking advantage of his horse’s beginning to plunge and rear from being fretted at the sudden check it had received, he extricated his rein from the other’s grasp, and galloped at full speed down the road.

It maddened him even to think of what might have been suffered by his own beloved Marie. That she, so delicately reared and so tenderly cared for, should be exposed to the brutal violence of such men as he knew were among his own troop. That she, so joyous, so light-hearted, so formed for scenes of brightness and gaiety, should be passing through such horrible persecutions as had made his blood run cold to hear described, even when the sufferers were perfectly indifferent or unknown. That she, the one idol of his heart, should suffer all this, avowedly under his sanction, by his authority. He groaned aloud, and urged his horse to his utmost speed.

Could he have reached the château in the first half-hour of his ride, he would no doubt have fulfilled the Count's prediction, and compromised his own safety without benefiting his friends. But the distance was considerable. The mad headlong pace at which he rode soon exhausted his horse. He was forced to stop, and get it exchanged for a fresh one as he passed through the town where he was quartered. And thus he had time to think, and to view the case in all its bearings. At such a time, with such a state of feeling, mere selfish considerations had no weight. But when he reflected, that to throw away his favour at Court, and the influence his high services had gained him, was to deprive himself of all future opportunities of serving Marie, he was at once aroused to the necessity of prudence and moderation.

He saw, further, that the rescue of his friends was by no means impossible, even in the way which caution might dictate. One peculiarity of these dragonnades was their legalized lawlessness, so to speak. Although the soldiers were let loose upon the defenceless Huguenots for the very purpose of forcing them to apostatize, yet such purpose was by no means avowed. They were billeted in such and such numbers, upon such and such individuals, because the service of the state required it. These same individuals were bound to provide them with food and lodging, and the soldiers were authorized to enforce their claims if necessary, but their commission ostensibly extended no farther. True, they were liberally rewarded for all the forced conversions they were the means of bringing about. True, the cruelties they used for this purpose were well known. But these cruelties were still rather ignored than authorized, and

De Raynal felt that it was competent for him to restrain his men in the exercise of such violence, without laying himself open to the blame of favouring the Huguenots. At least, such a charge could not be openly brought against him. And by prudence he believed he might even avert its secret influence.

He arrived at the scene of action, just when Gaspar and the monk were arguing about their next proceedings, and when Theodore, finding his commands and his entreaties unattended to, was endeavouring with trembling, nerveless fingers to cut or unfasten the cords that bound Marie to the bed.

The door of the room was open, and the exclamation of “Mon Capitaine” from the men outside, the rattle of their arms in performing their salute, excited the attention of the whole party.

Theodore looked up, recognised the Baron, and, in his agitation, forgetting every circumstance of time and place, greeted him as if they had parted only the day before.

“Gerard!” he cried; “O come to my help! She is dying, and they will not let me take her out of this horrible dungeon.”

One glance at Marie was all De Raynal could bear. To see her in such a place, on such a miserable bed—pale, motionless—her hair dishevelled—her dress disordered by the rude handling of the soldiers—her tender ankles bruised with the hard cords which bound them,—he could not look upon it, could not think of it, and preserve his composure. Action—prompt, vigorous action—was his only safety. Embracing Theodore with the warmth due to their early friendship, he assured him that all should be arranged as he wished,

and gave immediate orders to the men around to summon the lady's own attendants, and have her carried wherever the Count should desire.

He then turned to Gaspar, and somewhat sternly demanded the meaning of all he saw. The man answered sullenly, vexed at the appearance and interference of his superior. But the priest, in his conciliatory manner, gave a softened narration of the whole.

"The good sergeant," he said, "had felt a deep interest in the Count and his family; and, anxious for their eternal good, and zealous for the glory of Holy Mother Church, had used every means to bring them to a knowledge of their errors. A little gentle constraint had been used; but he was glad to say it had been completely successful, as the Count de Blancard was now an avowed professor of their holy religion."

A smile of bitter scorn curled the Baron's lip, which changed into an expression of the fiercest indignation, as he heard in what the gentle constraint had consisted; but he restrained all open manifestation of either anger or contempt, and merely remarked a little sarcastically, "That he was sure 'Holy Mother Church' would duly appreciate and commend the zeal her children had shewn in her cause."

"And the king also, mon Capitaine," said the sergeant. "The king earnestly desires the conversion of every soul in his kingdom."

"A wise and holy desire of a most wise and holy king," De Raynal answered. "I shall take care that his Majesty be duly informed of your success in this matter; but now that it is accomplished, the sooner we leave this place the better. In a time of sickness

and distress, I cannot suffer you to remain to incommodate the family. I shall provide you quarters at my own expense for the rest of the time you should have remained here."

"But the lady is still an obstinate heretic," Gaspar urged, doggedly.

"The lady, sirrah!" was the stern answer, "is in no condition to listen to arguments of any kind," with a contemptuous emphasis on the words, which the monk, at least, well understood. "And, at any rate, she is one whose friends and relations are too high in power and influence to render the position of her persecutors either desirable or safe. You will see that the men make ready to march immediately."

Gaspar could only obey in sullen silence. The officer turned to Father Joseph.

"May I ask whom I have the honour to address?" he asked, courteously.

"I am called Father Joseph, and am the unworthy superior of the neighbouring monastery of Lamont," was his meek answer.

"Like most of our reverend fathers, you have, I presume, a knowledge of medicine? Might I request, as a personal favour to myself, that you would see if the lady's attendants know what remedies to use for her indisposition? And might I further ask you to let me know her state, ere I leave the place?"

Father Joseph readily acquiesced, well pleased to conciliate the favour of the Count, by assisting in the recovery of his wife. And while he was busy at the side of the poor sufferer, the Baron, in a fever of excitement and anxiety, paced up and down the ante-

room, listening to every sound, and by turns yielding to despair and to sanguine hope for the result.

After about twenty minutes Father Joseph reappeared, and reported that consciousness and strength seemed about to return, and that he had withdrawn, lest his presence might excite or bewilder the patient, directing the attendants to recall him should it be necessary.

They waited together for a few minutes to see if such necessity might arise, and soon heard her voice, in weak trembling accents, speaking to her husband. Gerard had not heard it for more than ten years. It thrilled to his very heart; and, afraid his emotion might overmaster him, he bade the monk a hasty farewell, joined his troop, and rode off at their head.



CHAPTER V.

EUGÈNE.

ND where was Eugène all this time? We did not see him with his sisters, watching for their mother's recovery from her fainting fit; and when consciousness returned the second time, and Marie looked round upon her children, still Eugène was absent. No one could answer her anxious questions regarding him. But we who are privileged to go everywhere, and to know everything, shall find out an answer for ourselves.

On that first day, when the children were taken from their parents, the little girls and their bonne were left in comparative freedom,—the only restriction laid upon them being, that they should not go near the room where the Count and Countess were confined, and should not leave the house. But Eugène was separated from them, and conveyed by two soldiers across the court-yard, through the ruins of the old château, to a small turret at the farther end, and up a dark winding staircase, to a room near the top, where they found the blacksmith of the hamlet employed in repairing the lock of the door, which had been long unused. The bolt was gone, but the staple remained in the wall, and the man was fitting into it a heavy bar of wood.

He looked up at Eugène as the men brought him to the door. He was a Catholic, and had always hated his Protestant landlord.

“ Ha, ha !” he said, with a malicious smile ; “ so this is the bird for my cage—is it ? But you have brought him too soon, my friends ; the cage is hardly ready yet.”

“ The little bird, as you call him, dared to sing some of his damnable Huguenot songs in the very presence of the holy Father ; so we were forced to carry him off at once, without waiting to know whether you were ready or not,” answered one of the men, giving Eugène a shake as he spoke.

“ Ah ! well, he can sing here as long as he likes, and no one be a bit the worse,” rejoined the smith. “ No one to hear your music here, my gay bird, unless it be Loup-garou,* or the Letiche of that poor baby your heretic parents allowed to go to hell last spring for want of proper baptism.”

“ Come, come, friends,” interposed the other soldier, “ it is cruel and cowardly to strike an unarmed man. Remember the poor babe cannot defend himself : it is a shame on your manhood to tease him. Never mind, my fine fellow,” clapping him on the back, “ Loup-garou and Letiche shall never come near you, if you only say an *Ave* or two every now and then.”

“ Say an *Ave* !” cried his comrade, laughing ; “ why, that is just what he cannot do. Come, try, little heretic ; let us hear how you could manage to get through one.”

“ I cannot ; and if I could, I would not ;—and our

* *Loup-garou* means “ were-wolf,” and *Letiche*, “ the ghost of an unbaptized child.”

Marie was baptized, she has no letiche," Eugène said, boldly, his eyes flashing fire on his tormentors.

" Hear how the bold cock crows. Ah ! well, friend, here is your cage ready for you now. In you go ; and we shall see if all this bravery hold out a day and night alone here,"—and as he spoke he thrust him into the room, and barred it on him.

It was a dreary, lonesome place, and so poor Eugène felt it, bold and high-spirited as he was. He was but nine years old, and by no means free from the superstitious terrors of his time. In broad daylight, and with the bright sunshine streaming in at the little window, there was little fear of a visit from any spirit, good or bad. But, if even then his heart beat quick at the thoughts of them, what would it be in the dark night, with that dismal staircase, and the long dreary labyrinths of ruins between him and any human being ! He listened to the receding footsteps of his guards and the smith, and fancied how fearful it would be to listen thus in the silence and darkness of night, and to know that any sound that might arise must be something mysterious—something which it would chill his very heart to hear.

But he would not suffer such thoughts to frighten him ; and he tossed back his head, and proudly dashed the tears from his eyes. He would think of something else, and forget all about Loup-garou and Letiche.

Easily resolved, poor Eugène ! But what is there in this empty room to think about ? Look round ; there are only four bare walls, with grotesque carving round the top, too far up for you to see distinctly ; an uneven dirty floor, with a jar of water, and a small loaf of bread standing in the middle ; a wide, desolate-looking

fireplace, without a grate, and a small square window without casement.

But the window, if it could be reached, might afford some amusement, some distraction to his gloomy thoughts. By its means he might look out upon grass, and trees, and flowers, ay, even upon living and moving creatures. There was comfort in the very thought, and he made a vehement spring, hoping to catch by the ledge, and swing himself up, when he could sit easily and comfortably in the recess formed by the thick walls. But, alas! it was too high; he was too short. Again and again he tried, taking as long runs as the small room would admit, and straining every nerve to attain his end, but in vain; he only hurt himself by frequent falls, exhausted his strength in useless efforts, and at last, worn out, he gave it up, sat down on the ground, and yielded to a hearty fit of crying. This relieved him, he did not understand how or why, but as the fit passed off, much of his terror and dismay passed off with it. As his sobs became more gentle, his tears less copious, his heart felt lighter, his thoughts turned to other and more happy things. He began to recall the scene of the past night—his mother's peace, and even happiness in the midst of danger and sorrow—her assured confidence that the Lord watched over, and cared for them all,—the sweet words from God's own book, with which she had comforted her children, and brought back sunshine to their troubled fearful hearts. Then he thought of his own peculiar feelings, the expectation of instant death, with the loaded pistol pressing against his temple, the subsequent horror of knowing that, had he died then, he could not have gone to heaven—the glorious conviction which had for the first time become

real and true to him, that Christ was the Saviour of sinners—and the rapturous happiness of feeling that his own sins were indeed all washed out in that dear Saviour's blood, he, sinful as he was, accepted of God for that dear Saviour's sake—brighter and fuller than ever rose that joy now.

"God my father and friend," he cried aloud, "Christ my shepherd ! oh, surely I shall never want. He carries the lambs in His bosom : there I am quite safe, and so happy, so very happy!"

Then he remembered how often he had heard all these precious truths before, and how little he had ever cared for them, or even thought about them.

"God knew how careless and forgetful I should be, even when He sent His own Son to die for me," he thought, "and Christ knew, all the time He was bearing the punishment of my sins, what a careless, sinful boy I should be, and yet they loved me, and did all this for me. And after I had gone on forgetting God, and wishing to forget Him as long as ever I could,—the very first moment I turned to seek after Him, He heard me, and came to me at the very beginning of my sorrow, to stay with me and to comfort me. O God, what great love Thou hast shewn to me,—that the Lord of heaven and earth should come down into my prison, and take care of, and comfort me, a poor sinful boy!" And in the fulness of his heart he began to sing one of the sweet simple Huguenot hymns he had often sung with his father, mother, and sisters. He had liked to sing these hymns, liked the music, liked to join his voice to theirs. But never before had his whole heart rejoiced in the song as now. Never before had the words been to him real and living truths, his own words

in which he poured forth the joy and gratitude of his full heart to God himself, to the God of love and goodness, who had shewn to him the exceeding riches of His kindness in Christ Jesus. Louder and more joyous rose the strain, till it reached the ears of the soldiers, busy about their horses in the stable-yard below. They listened to him astonished, and not unmoved to hear so young a child praising God in so trying a situation.

When his voice grew tired, he began again to look around for some object of amusement, and this time not quite in vain. The window, whose height had so tantalized him, afforded him at least a little comfort and interest. By it the soft summer wind blew in, bringing with it sweet fragrance and pleasant sounds. The sun shone cheerily on the opposite wall—the shadows of the creeping plants entwined round the opening flickered in the broad line of light, and gave him some amusement in tracing resemblances to their fantastic forms. Now and then, too, the shadow of a bird passed quickly across, and he took an interest in guessing what bird it was, and following it in fancy to the wood, seeing its nest high up in some old tree, and picturing the mother and little ones watching for the father's return, and welcoming him with joyful song, or chirping, and with restless fluttering wings.

Such visions brought up recollections of many happy hours spent in these woods, and with something of his father's power of abstraction and imagination, the little fellow lived them over again. One day in particular recurred to his mind, when, worn out with his own wild play, he had gone to lie down beside his father on the bank of the river, under the shade of a fine chestnut. Eugène saw again the picturesque branches of the old

tree, watched again the bright glancing of light on the water, heard again the pleasant rippling sound. As they lay there, his father had given him one of his vivid realizing pictures of Bible stories. It was of Hagar and Ishmael he had spoken ; and brightly and freshly came back to the boy's mind all the scenes then so clearly presented to it. The desolate mother going forth with her child, the lad faint with thirst lying down to die, the bright angel coming to the mother in her deep despair, the cool bubbling fountain beside the bush, and the intense delight with which mother and son would hear its soft murmur, and catch the first sight of its glancing waters.

And as thus he recollect ed and mused, the wearied boy fell asleep, sitting where he was on the hard floor, leaning against the wall.

He slept long, but awoke with a violent start ; and bewildered, frightened, stiff and sore from the hardness of his bed and the constraint of his posture, his first impulse was to call aloud for his mother. Oh ! how dreary was the thought that no one would hear his call. That he might be in danger, sick, dying, and that he must bear it all alone. That dear mother, who would have given her life for his, could not hear him, could not help him, could not even know of his situation. As the words "Mamma, mamma" passed his lips, he awoke to a full sense of his desolation, and covering his face with his hands, he wept again long and bitterly.

When he recovered himself, and began again to recollect the God and Saviour in whose arms he lay, and whose watchful love and care never slumbered nor slept, it was a great comfort to pour out all the dreary feelings of his heart into that Saviour's ear, and to pray

to Him for help and comfort for all the dear ones of whose fate or circumstances he was quite ignorant. Again, the sweet consciousness of his Father's loving-kindness and presence revived and cheered his drooping spirits.

The sun had gone round from his window, but he rose and walked up and down the room, and at each turn that brought him in that direction, he could look up at the bright sky, and watch, as the leaves of the creepers now caught and now lost the yellow rays of sunlight. The appetite of childhood was now in its way a relief to him. He ate his loaf of bread and drank some of the water with a sense of refreshment, and the very act of doing so was a little employment, a slight break, at least, upon the wearisome monotony of his day.

Towards evening he heard the sound of footsteps on the stair. Harsh as the soldiers had shewn themselves, even the presence of one of them would be almost a relief, and he watched a little anxiously to hear if the steps were going to stop at his door. They did stop, the bolt was withdrawn, a soldier came in with another jar of water, and looking up at him, Eugène saw to his joy that it was the same man who had spoken kindly to him in the morning.

The soldier shut the door, and setting his back against it, stood looking down upon Eugène with interest and compassion.

"Well, my child," he said kindly, "how do you get on up here by yourself? Have you been very sorrowful and much afraid of Letiche?"

"No, I have not been afraid," Eugène began proudly; then added ingenuously, "I was at first, but I asked

God to take care of me, and I know He will not allow bad spirits to hurt me. As for good ones, they will not wish to do so."

"Well, you are a brave boy," answered the other, "and I like you for it. I offered to bring you up the water, that I might give you a word or two of advice. Father Joseph will be up soon to preach to you—mind my words. Do what he bids you, and make the sign of the cross, like this," suiting the action to the words, "when he asks you."

"Why, what good can it do me?" Eugène asked.

The soldier looked a little puzzled. He was wholly ignorant even of the doctrines he professed, and had no clear idea of what the sign meant.

"What good? Why, it will at least open the doors of your prison, and set you free," he said at last, "and for the matter of that, what harm can it do?"

"That I do not know, for I do not know what it means," was the boy's prompt answer; "but this I do know, my own papa and mamma love me with all their hearts, and yet they would have suffered your cruel man to kill me, rather than make that sign; and they know what it means, though I do not."

"I don't think they know what they are about," the man cried with vehemence, "to murder themselves and their children for a mere nothing, a mere bagatelle."

"If it be a mere nothing, why do you treat us so cruelly on account of it?" Eugène asked boldly.

"Cruelly indeed, my poor child; but do not say that I do it. I hate the whole business from my soul. It breaks my heart, it makes my blood boil, to see that sweet lady suffer as she does."

"How does she suffer? What are they doing to her?" Eugène asked breathlessly.

The man was unwilling to answer, but the boy pressed him so vehemently that he could not refuse, and with tears of pity he told what was passing at the château.

Eugène listened with horror. He had seen the beginning of the trial, had seen his father and mother bound, and the baby taken from them. But in all the noise and tumult of the moment, he had not heard distinctly what Gaspar had threatened, and had not understood even what he did hear. Now that he realized the fearful truth, that they were murdering his darling baby-brother, and that by the slow and terrible death of starvation, his grief and consternation passed all bounds. He threw himself on the ground, tore his hair, beat his breast and forehead with his clenched hands, and refused to listen to comfort.

The soldier was deeply moved. Braving the displeasure of his superiors, he waited patiently until the passion of grief had exhausted itself. And when Eugène, worn out with the violence of his own emotions, grew more calm from mere fatigue, he took him in his arms, and soothed and caressed him as a mother might have done.

"I must leave you now, my poor child," he said at last, when Eugène's sobs had nearly ceased. "But I am appointed to watch the horses in the stable to-night, and I shall contrive to be with you as much of it as I can. My comrades will not betray me, for your hymns this forenoon brought tears into many an eye."

Eugène thanked him warmly, and emboldened by his kindness, asked him, as the greatest favour he could

grant, to lift him up to the window, that he might sit there, and look again, as he said, "upon God's beautiful grass and trees."

The man complied with his request, and in the delight of seeing once again the full light, the free country, and all the sights his heart had been longing for, Eugène forgot his regret at losing this kind friend's companionship.

The window was too high up to admit of his seeing the familiar terraces and flower-beds round the house. But the more distant prospect with the sunset light on it, was sufficient happiness after a day spent in looking at four bare walls. The ground in front of the château sloped rapidly down to the river, and rose again, with equal steepness, on the other side. It was this opposite bank, beautifully wooded, upon which Eugène looked. Either nature or art had formed some fine glades running up into the wood, and these were shown off to particular advantage in that light with the long rays of the setting sun lying on the soft green grass. At the end of one of these glades was a small summer house. Knowing where to look for it, the boy could distinguish its white roof gleaming through the trees, and tears rolled slowly down his cheeks, as he recalled the many happy fêtes he had enjoyed in that spot, with his father, mother, and sisters.

He was so absorbed in recollections that he did not hear Father Joseph come up stairs, and into the room. The priest looked round, and not seeing his prisoner, fancied the guard had suffered him to escape, either through negligence or pity.

"The scoundrel," he said aloud, "but he shall suffer for this, I can tell him. He shall be punished."

Eugène heard, and fancying it was the indulgence of sitting in the window which had aroused the priest's wrath, he jumped lightly down, saying eagerly—

"Do not be angry with that kind man. It was my fault. I begged so hard that he would lift me up."

"Oh, you are there, are you?" Father Joseph answered, much relieved. "Well, come here, I have much to say to you," and he looked round for a seat, that he might begin his admonitions with due comfort and dignity.

Alas! poor Father Joseph, it was a hard case. It might be all very well that the heretic boy should be left a whole day without even a stool whereon to rest his wearied limbs. But that a dignitary of the holy Church, used to every comfort and luxury, should be exposed to such privation, was intolerable. It had the effect of shortening the scene, and Eugène's temptation. The priest could not stand to argue or reason. He briefly and decidedly explained to the child what was required of him, and commanded obedience on pain of being sent to the monastery of Lamont, and shut up there for life, or until a proper sense of duty had been taught him.

Eugène did not hesitate. True, he did not clearly understand what signing the cross, or repeating an *Ave*, meant. But that they were sinful he was thoroughly convinced, otherwise his father and mother would never have refused compliance, when their refusal involved the life of himself and the little Theodore.

"I cannot sin against God," was the only answer he gave to the priest's commands and menaces.

Father Joseph opened the door, and called up the soldiers, who were in waiting. To them he gave the

boy, with orders to convey him to the monastery, and give him in charge to one of the brethren whom he named.

Eugène neither struggled nor remonstrated. He went quietly away with his guards, and all through the long and somewhat fatiguing walk, he strengthened and comforted his heart with the thought, that the Lord Jesus walked by his side, and knew exactly how much sorrow, fear, and weariedness he suffered.

The priest stood looking after the little party, until they were out of sight, with an expression of satisfaction and self-congratulation, and as he walked slowly back to the château, he looked complacently round upon the fine domain, the heir to which was now in his own possession.

Not quite a twelvemonth had elapsed since the higher powers in the Church had seen fit, for the honour of their religion, to send Father Joseph to the monastery of Lamont, which was becoming infamous through the laxity of morals and of discipline. Under such circumstances he had found ample employment in the internal government of his own little kingdom. And it was only very lately that he had had leisure to direct his attention to the state of matters in the neighbourhood. From the first moment of his doing so, however, it had been a sore thorn in his side, to think that Blan-card with its fine woods, luxuriant pastures, and fruitful vineyards, should be in possession of a heretic. His only comfort was in looking forward to the fast advancing wave of persecution, as the surest means of remedying this sore evil. While awaiting its approach, he busied himself in endeavouring to gain an insight into the characters, habits, and circumstances of the

Count and his lady, and employed many ingenious devices to make their personal acquaintance. In both objects he was foiled. The life of complete retirement in which they lived, precluded all intimacy with their Catholic neighbours, none of whom were qualified to give the monk the information he desired. And his more direct efforts to get an introduction to the château were evaded courteously but decidedly by its master. Father Joseph was, however, a man of no ordinary ability and penetration. Although he had hardly ever seen either Theodore or Marie before the night he accompanied Gaspar to Blancard, and had never spoken to them, he yet easily read their characters in that first interview. As we have seen, he calculated with great nicety the chances of success with one and the other. And judging that the Count's conversion would, at the best, be merely formal, and the influence of the Church over him merely that of fear, he had at an early period of the work decided, that to gain possession of the heir would be the best mode of serving the interest of the Church in general, and the monastery of Lamont in particular. It was for this purpose that he had given directions for Eugène's imprisonment, trusting to the effect of solitude and fear, in breaking the boy's spirit, and making him pliable to his will. The smallest sign of conformity to the Catholic religion would have sufficed for the monk's purpose. And although foiled in his first attempt to get even such a sign, he by no means abandoned his scheme.

Nor, indeed, had he reason so to abandon it. The scheme was by no means impracticable. In those days it was a thing of frequent occurrence to take children from their Huguenot parents, and imprison them in

religious houses, until they were old enough or well enough instructed to make an open and decided profession of the Catholic faith. In the event of both the Count and Countess continuing firm to their principles, imprisonment, the galleys, or death would be their probable portion. And, in that event, Father Joseph knew he could easily establish a right to the guardianship of the young heir. If, on the other hand, one or both apostatized, it might still be easy to convince the authorities, that it would be expedient to retain the boy as a hostage for his parents' adherence to their new profession, and in order that he might receive a training better fitted to make him a zealous devoted servant to the Church than any they were likely to give him.

Nor was he disappointed. As soon as Theodore ascertained where his boy was, he employed every means to regain possession of him. He made use of every form of expostulation, entreaty, and menace to Father Joseph ; sued his claim to the guardianship of his own child in the proper courts of law, and finally petitioned the king to interfere and see that justice was done him. But in vain. The prize was too great to be readily given up by the monk. Courts of law were, in those days, under ecclesiastical domination, and from the Court he received a significant hint, that considering the obstinacy the Countess had shewn in her adherence to heresy, it was safest for himself not to attract too much attention to the state of his household, and that the king, in his paternal regard for the best interests of all his subjects, thought it very advisable that the boy should be consigned to the care of those who could give him more wholesome instruction than in the present state of matters could be hoped for at his own

home. Thus intimidated by the covert threat of a greater evil in being deprived of his wife, Theodore saw himself obliged to submit. And the Baron de Raynal, who had exerted himself to the utmost, to guard Marie from all molestation, was also convinced that it would be dangerous to urge the matter farther.

In the meantime, how was the child treated in the monastery? After the first weeks, upon the whole, not unkindly. He had found companions in his imprisonment. Other children of various ages, torn, like himself, from Huguenot homes, were at the monastery when he arrived, and the number was constantly increased. Of these, the greater part were timidly submissive to the dictates of their new masters. Many, indeed, were too young and ignorant to think of resistance, to understand why they should resist. But there were a few who, like Eugène, withstood bravely all the persuasions, bribes, threats, and harshness, used to induce them to comply with what they knew to be wrong. Some of the things required of them, such as worshipping images and pictures, and praying to saints, they knew from the Bible to be sinful, and boldly declared their belief on the subject. And in regard to others, which they did not understand, they refused obedience lest they might be wrong, and on the ground that their parents had forbidden them to use such ceremonies.

At first great severity, even cruelty, was practised, to shake the firmness of the young martyrs, and some gave way under it, although Eugène did not. He was confined for weeks in a small cell, with no amusement except such as he could find in the missals, breviary, and lives of the saints, placed there for his edification. He was for a short time shut up in the dismal dungeon

of the monastery. Severe foggings, cruel confinement in painful positions, were all tried. But though such measures weakened his strength, and paled his cheek, they could not shake his constancy, a constancy which the Lord Himself had given, which the Lord Himself upheld. And as the child's death was by no means desired, Father Joseph relaxed in his severity, so soon as he saw his health seriously affected ; and rendered more secure in his possession of him, by the interest the higher authorities took in his claim, he was contented to proceed in the work of conversion more moderately, and to trust to the effect of time to eradicate the impression his parents' instructions had made upon the boy's mind.

Poor fellow ! he felt very bitterly the being shut out from all intercourse with those he loved, and who loved him. But he was in very truth carried like a lamb in his Saviour's arms, and richly did the Lord make up to him for all the deprivations he suffered. He had no earthly friend to instruct and guide him. But the Lord, the Prophet of His people, took that office upon Himself, recalling to the child's mind all the instructions he had received, all the passages of Scripture he had heard or learned in happier days, causing him to see their truth, to feel their value, and ever making to him new and precious revelations of Himself, and of all His glorious attributes. Eugène had now no tender mother to care for his happiness, to take part in his joys and sorrows. But the Lord taught him to rest trustingly on His love and tender care, to pour out his whole heart to Him, to tell Him every thought and feeling, every sorrow, wish, or fear, and caused him to hear His voice speaking to him in words of comfort and encouragement.

The monotony of his present life was very unsuitable to a boy of his spirit and energy. But here, too, the Lord in His loving-kindness provided many alleviations. Eugène had a sweet voice and a correct ear. The monks, taking pride and pleasure in the excellency of their choir, were careful to give him the instructions necessary to fit him for taking part in it ; and the boy's enthusiastic love of music made his daily singing lesson a real pleasure to him. A similar taste for drawing enabled him to get pleasantly through another daily task, that of copying the old illuminated manuscripts, of which the monastery of Lamont had a great store. Copies of these manuscripts sold for a high price to the antiquarians of the day. The monks were constantly employed in making them. And so soon as Eugène's talent was discovered, he was trusted to assist in the more delicate and interesting parts of the work, and freed from the more tiresome and mechanical copying of the mere letters. So useful did he prove in this department, that there might have been a danger of his being employed upon it to such an extent as to injure his health and spirits, had not his life been of too much value to the monastery to permit the judicious superior to neglect a due care of both. And the enforced labour in the garden, dictated by this care, was a great amusement as well as benefit to the child. The long hours in the chapel—listening to prayers, and witnessing ceremonies he did not understand—were wearisome enough. But even there Eugène often enjoyed much happiness, praying to God in his heart, and enjoying precious communion with Him. He got one of the monks to translate for him the Latin words of the various chants, requiems, &c., he was required to join in. Those which

were merely passages of Scripture he sang with great heartiness, and in others which he thought wrong, such as addresses to the Virgin or saints, he contrived to sing some of his old well-known hymns without being found out. At such times, enjoying the fine music with his whole heart, and uniting with it fervent praise to the God who was so good and loving to him, he would be excited to perfect rapture, his face would glow, his eyes light up, his voice rise and swell in the irrepressible joy of his spirit, and Father Joseph observing him would fancy that his wishes were on the point of being fulfilled, that through music and all its charms, such a child might be easily won. Poor Father Joseph ! even your shrewdness was at fault here. Never was *Eugène* farther from yielding obedience to you, than after his whole soul had been strengthened by such exercises as these.

But we must leave *Eugène* for the present. Only let me say one word to my readers before we do so. Perhaps some of you may think that an anxious mother like Marie ought to have instructed her boy more perfectly in the forms of his own and the Catholic religion, ought to have taken care that he should, at least, understand what was wrong in those things that might be required of him. But you must remember that in those days children's intellects were far less cultivated than they are now, that *Eugène* had been a very thoughtless boy, far fonder of play than of lessons, and that his mother had found it expedient to be careful not to exact too much attention from him, not to weary him with instructions of whose value he had no idea. In such circumstances did she not do wisely to take the time and attention he was willing to bestow for matters

of more vital importance than any mere forms? Her beautiful and heart-touching lessons about the Saviour's love had made an impression even on the careless boy's heart, and when God gave him His Holy Spirit to awaken him to seek after a personal interest in that Saviour, all these lessons came back in freshness and strength, and were his best safeguards against compliance with anything which could rob that Saviour of the glory of His perfect salvation, or cast dishonour upon His love and willingness to save. So that he ever looked with perfect abhorrence upon the doctrine of the merits of saints, or prayers for their or the Virgin's intercession, and upon all parallel errors.



CHAPTER VI.

REMORSE.



ORE than a year has passed ; and we find Theodore and Marie in the little cabinet where we saw them first. But how changed both are since then !

Look at Marie as she sits there close under the window, bending over her tapestry frame. Can you recognise the eager, impulsive, yet clinging, dependent creature she was four years ago ? A girl she was then in heart and mind, if not in years. A woman, a grave, self-possessed, self-relying woman she is now. There is great calmness in that smooth brow and quiet eye. But it is the calmness of one who has passed through the storm, and has learned by experience the strength and stability of the anchor to which she trusts ; not the calmness that has never feared, because it has never known sorrow.

The Baron de Raynal's zeal in Marie's cause aroused other friends to exert themselves likewise, and their combined influence sufficed to procure her a certain measure of freedom and peace. But it was not such freedom as you and I, dear readers, are blessed with, in our happy free country, and happy free times. Free she was to remain in her husband's home, to sit by his side, but with the consciousness that the import of their

most private and confidential conversations might be extorted from Theodore in confession, and made use of for her ruin. Free to keep her children with her, knowing that at any time her counsels or instructions to them might be overheard, and might be the cause of driving her to exile, prison, or death. Free to rule as a puppet over a household, hired by her own money to act as spies upon her every look, word, or action. But freedom from the intrusion of Father Joseph and his emissaries at all hours, into every room of the house, she did not enjoy. Nor freedom to read God's Word when and where she pleased. She had seen the whole house searched for Bibles, had seen them collected and burnt before herself, her husband, and children. And the only copy she now possessed was a small one of the Old Testament, which she had concealed about her own person at the risk of her life, and into which she dared not look even in her own chamber without many precautions to guard against surprise. Nor freedom to worship God as her conscience dictated. That house was now a mass of ruins where she had so often with her husband enjoyed hearing the preaching of God's truth, and joined in prayer and praise with his people; and the aged pastor whom they so tenderly loved, was now hiding for his life amid the dens and caves of the earth. Her soul's thirst for the public ordinances of God could only be satisfied by her stealing out alone in the darkness of night, and with beating heart and hasty foot, finding her way to the lonely spot on the verge of the forest, or on the face of the hill, where others of God's faithful ones met to cheer and strengthen their own and each other's hearts by mutual exhortation and prayer. Thus restrained, thus

watched, we can well understand how it is that stillness and reserve are now the distinguishing characteristics of her manner, once so open, animated, and demonstrative.

The change in Theodore is still more striking. He has withdrawn so much into the shade that you can scarcely see the expression of his countenance; but every line of his figure as he sits there drooping, listless, despairing, tells how greatly he is changed from the enthusiastic dreamer, thirsting for martyrdom, rejoicing in the prospect of heaven's glory, whom we saw in the same room four years ago.

Poor Theodore! I have no doubt that you have despised him heartily for his weakness in the hour of trial; but could you now see into his heart, every harsher feeling would be swallowed up in pity. Like many in similar circumstances, he had believed that a merely nominal profession of the Catholic faith was all that was required of him. That having yielded obedience to the first demands of his persecutors, nothing more would be asked for; but that when the troops had fairly left the neighbourhood, he should be allowed to pursue his own path in peace. Very different from such expectation was the reality. No detail of his life, private or domestic, was suffered to escape the interference of Father Joseph.

All his old servants, with the exception of two, were dismissed, and their places filled with others, completely under the influence, and devoted to the interest, of the Catholic Church. The two exceptions were the children's bonne Marguerite, whose weakness and timidity rendered her at least harmless in Father Joseph's eyes, and Bernard, an old confidential servant, who had served

the family of Blancard since he was ten years old, had nursed the former Count in his last illness, accompanied his young master to Beauchardis, and never quitted him for a day since. He was a professed Protestant, but in spite of good instructions and earnest exhortations from both his masters, he was thoroughly indifferent to religion. Devoted, unselfish attachment to his master took with him the place of every higher feeling or principle. This same devotion, and a certain fearlessness of spirit, and straightforward honesty of purpose, made him an object of dislike to the wily priest. But his indifference was all in his favour, and his master was so determined in his refusal to part with him, that Father Joseph had in the end yielded the point, taking good care to make this concession the reason for urging obedience to many a tyrannical demand.

The next thing required of the Count was the giving up of all the Bibles his house contained, that they might be destroyed in Father Joseph's presence. His resistance to this was long and obstinate; but he had put himself into the hands of those who would shew no mercy. In once professing the Catholic faith, he had placed himself in a much more dangerous position than that he had before occupied. His spiritual guides scrupled not to threaten him with the utmost vengeance of the law against apostates; and he had no strength to brave that vengeance, now that he had voluntarily withdrawn himself from the honourable post of a soldier of the Lord, fighting under His banner, upheld by His might, protected by His shield, comforted by the consciousness of His presence, guidance, and love. Looking upon himself as having sinned beyond all hope of pardon, as shut out for ever from the light of God's coun-

tenance, he yielded sullenly to what was demanded of him, and gave himself up to the despair of feeling that nothing he did or left undone, could now be of the least consequence.

Marie had watched the growth of this despair with intense pain, and had felt the utmost anxiety to help him to resist its influence ; but her opportunities of speaking to him were few and interrupted, and such as they were, he seemed anxious to prevent her from using them for any such purpose. He never confided to her the state of his thoughts or feelings, and after that first day when he had told her of his apostasy, he had carefully avoided every allusion to the subject.

You will readily believe that Marie lost no opportunity of instructing her children out of the Scriptures. Most frequently all she could venture on was to repeat to them from memory some of the passages with which her mind was well stored. But occasionally, at long intervals, circumstances did arise in which she dared to indulge her children and herself, by bringing out the precious volume, and reading to them from its pages, or hearing them read to her.

Such an occasion was the present. Father Joseph was confined to bed by serious illness, and the parish priest appointed head spy in his absence, had been sent for to a distant part of the province. It was, therefore, with a feeling of comparative security, that Marie had called the girls into her cabinet, and uncovered the Bible from its hiding-place for their perusal. This hiding-place had been devised by Marie herself, and made by Bernard. The open book was nailed upon a little wooden bench, whose finely carved legs and feet made it a suitable piece of furniture for a drawing-room

even in that ornament-loving age. A false top, thickly stuffed, and covered with fine tapestry, stood beside Marie, ready to be put on at a moment's notice. In order to secure the open pages from being torn or creased, when the top was taken off or put on, a strong leatheren cover was secured over them, which could be easily folded back when the book was in use; and the false top was skilfully hollowed out in the centre, so that while it fitted close round the edges, the Bible was preserved from undue pressure. A long wooden pin at each corner fitted into a corresponding socket in the bench. And although this made it a little more difficult to adjust the top in haste, it yet insured it from slipping under the hands of the servants while dusting or arranging the furniture.

The two little girls knelt on the floor in front of the bench ; Marie had been reading to them, but at their earnest entreaties she had consented that Hortense should now read to her, and she had drawn forward her embroidery frame for the purpose of lessening the chance of detection in the event of surprise, and was bending over it with an apparent intentness well calculated to deceive any one who might see her through the window.

Whenever Marie was engaged in instructing her children, her husband contrived to be present, although he always sat, as now, withdrawn from the others, took no share in their conversation, and seemed only to find food for deeper despair in the words of Scripture which he overheard. On this occasion the children had chosen a favourite passage, the third chapter of Daniel. Poor things, they had known enough of grief and fear to feel all the beauty and comfort of the story. Hortense, with

her sweet voice, and pretty clear enunciation of each syllable, had just read the words, “ If it be so, our God whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace ; and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king : but if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up,” when she was suddenly interrupted by a deep groan from her father.

Marie rose instantly and went to him. The little girls, realizing at that moment only one cause of apprehension or distress, turned deadly pale. Aimée gave a low scream, and hid her face on her sister’s shoulder ; and Hortense, with trembling hands, drew forward the cover over the Bible, fastened it down, raised the top, fixed it in its place, and then sat down upon it, turning her eyes fearfully towards the door, by which she expected to see Father Joseph enter—but no Father Joseph made his appearance, and no sound was heard except the low whisper of their mother’s voice, as she bent over her husband, entreating him to tell her the cause of his manifest distress.

After a few minutes Theodore rose abruptly, almost throwing his wife from him, and left the room by a door opposite the one Hortense and Aimée were so intently watching. Marie stood a moment in doubt, and then followed him ; but he had reached his own room, had bolted himself in, and refused her admittance, in spite of all her tearful efforts to shake his determination. A few minutes she gave to the indulgence of sorrow at this fresh proof of her husband’s reserve towards her, to whom he had been used to confide every thought—a few more to seeking her Saviour’s sympathy and comfort, and then she went to rejoin her children.

They in the meantime had been much perplexed at what had occurred.

"Do you think, after all, that papa could have heard Father Joseph coming?" Aimée asked in a whisper.

"I don't think mamma would have left us here alone, if he had," Hortense answered, still keeping her eyes fixed on the door.

"Let us go and ask Bernard," Aimée suggested; and her sister agreeing, they ran lightly, though a little timidly, across the room, through the ante-room, at the door of which the faithful Bernard was stationed, to guard them from surprise.

He sat cutting out a little toy for Aimée, with his knife, singing, in a low voice, one of the many songs of the country.

"Oh," cried Aimée at once, "Bernard has heard, has seen nothing, or he would not sit singing there."

Bernard looked up in surprise. Hortense explained that they had feared, perhaps Father Joseph was coming.

"And the thought made your rosy cheek so pale, your bright eyes so wild, my little babes," he said, fondling them both. "Shame on any Father Joseph who could teach such young hearts so much fear! But be at peace, little ones, no Father Joseph in the world can cheat me. No Father Joseph in the world can come near you without my giving you due warning."

"But while you sing, Bernard, how can you hear his soft, soft step?" Hortense asked doubtfully.

"Readily enough, sweet one. Why, my blood begins to boil, my flesh to creep, when he is quarter of a

mile off. I do so heartily hate him, and all his crew. And see here, as I sit working, the hall-door could not open without the light flashing in my eyes. Even if I did not hear, I should see him the first moment his foot crossed the threshold."

"But the door from the tower?" Hortense cried, as it suddenly occurred to her mind. "Oh, Bernard! he could get in there, and come round to us by the other door, without passing you at all."

"No, Hortense," said Aimée, "that door is always locked, and the key on the inside. Father Joseph could not open that door from the outside."

"Poor innocents! you do not know the people who are around you," Bernard answered sorrowfully. "There is not a servant in the house who would not unlock the door for the priest, even though they knew that the lives of every one of you depended on keeping it shut. But do not look so terrified, sweet ones," he added. "Old Bernard is a match for the most cunning among them. See here this cord round the foot of my stool. It is fastened by a pulley to the tower-door, and that door cannot be opened a quarter of an inch without my feeling the strain on the cord."

Aimée knew little about pulleys. But she had perfect confidence in Bernard's assertion, and in Bernard's wisdom, and after admiring the toy he was making for her, she proposed to Hortense that they should go at once and tell mamma and papa what Bernard said, and how certain it was, that no Father Joseph could come to them, without Bernard knowing about it.

But Hortense stood still, she looked thoughtful and troubled.

"Oh, Bernard," she said, "surely you are,—surely you must be wrong. Not one among them! Oh, surely some of them care for us a little! Why should they not? We have always been kind to them."

"It is not, pretty innocent, that they do not care for you. How could any one help caring? But they have given themselves, body and soul, to the priests, and are bound to do what they command, whatever it be. We cannot wonder! They know that the priest can work them bitter woe here. They believe that he can send them to everlasting misery hereafter."

"But surely there are some, at least, who would try to keep me from evil," she urged tearfully.

"Marguerite, poor good soul, loves you dearly, and would gladly give her life for yours, but"—

"And Ninette," Aimée cried triumphantly, "you forgot Ninette, you stupid old Bernard."

He looked at her compassionately. Ninette was a young girl, hired to be the children's special attendant. She was gay, animated, and pleasing in manner. She professed great affection for the children, and they loved her dearly. But of the whole household Ninette was the one least to be trusted, the one most devoted to the priests, who had taken peculiar care in choosing her, because she had, from her position, peculiarly good opportunities of serving them. This Bernard knew, and he said so. Hortense burst into tears.

"Oh, I cannot bear it!" she sobbed out. "To think of so many watching to do us harm. What shall become of us?"

Bernard, vexed with himself for having said so much, tried to reassure her, and to soften down his own state-

ments. But it was from Aimée's lisping tongue that the only sure comfort came.

"Do not cry, dear Hortense," she said, clinging round her neck, and kissing her repeatedly. "Do not cry, and do not be afraid of what is to become of us. We have not to think about that. It is God who has the care of all that."

"Yes, indeed," Hortense cried, drying her tears. "It is God who has the charge of us, and if the whole world were watching to do us harm, we need not fear, for God is watching too, to do us good."

Marie at this moment came from the inner room, seeking them. They ran to her, and told her all that had passed. She spoke to them for a little about it, encouraged them to hold fast their confidence in God's love and care, and prayed with them, that He would help them to keep it ever in mind. She accompanied them to their own room, saw them put to bed, and remained beside them until they fell asleep, lest Ninette's presence might revive their fears. She then went back to the door of her husband's room.

It was still bolted. But this time Marie would take no denial, she felt that the crisis of his despair had come, and she could not bear to sit idle, and away from him, while he was passing through such a conflict. Overcome, at last, by her importunity, he gave her admittance. But he did it unwillingly, sullenly. He merely drew back the bolt, and returned to his seat without opening the door for her, or looking round when she entered. She went timidly up to him; laying her hand on his shoulder, and resting her head lightly against his, she waited for a few minutes, hoping he would speak, were it only to ask why she had

come. But when he continued obstinately silent, she could bear it no longer, but began again in a low, agitated voice, to beg for his confidence. For her sake, if not for his own, she pleaded. And she bade him remember how much sorrow she had to bear, and entreated him not to add to it by this terrible reserve.

“It is because I do remember, Marie, that I am so determined not to increase your sorrow by the knowledge of my misery,” he said at last. “To be bound for life to a husband you cannot love, whom you must despise in your heart,—that is burden enough for you to bear.”

“I do not contradict you,” she answered, kissing him fondly, “because I know I need not. You do not believe what you say.”

“I do believe it,” he cried with vehemence. “How can I help believing it, when I remember what I am? How can you help despising the base, cowardly apostate? Oh, Marie! would to God I had died before that terrible hour!”

“My own dearest husband, it makes me so glad to hear you speak thus,” she began; but he interrupted her even fiercely.

“Did you not know before I said it, that my whole soul was bowed down with sorrow and shame? Did you think I could deny my Lord, could cast myself for ever out of His presence and favour, and not feel remorse? Did you think me quite careless, quite hardened? Marie, you might have known me better.”

“And did know you better,” she said earnestly. But he did not hear her. He went on with increasing agitation.

" Not one hour, not one moment of peace or rest have I enjoyed since that day. In all places, in all companies, in all occupations, one thought weighs me down to the dust, that I have forsaken God, and that He has left me for ever. I see it written on everything upon which I look. I hear it in every sound that fills my ear. The daylight is a burden to me I can hardly bear. The dreams of night, a horror that will, in the end, drive me mad." He could say no more, but covering his face with his hands, he groaned aloud, and his whole body shook with the excess of his agitation.

It was terrible to see the strong man's agony. But Marie nerved herself to bear it. She clasped him tightly in her arms, as if to give him strength and comfort, even in her feeble support. And when his agitation began to subside, she forcibly subdued her own feelings, that she might be able to speak to him calmly and distinctly. She explained to him how much he had misunderstood her.

" I said I was glad, my dearest husband, not because words were necessary to make me know the depth of your repentance ; but because, by speaking of it, you have broken down the icy wall of reserve you have hitherto kept between us. You cannot think, dear Theodore, what a load it takes from my heart to be once again admitted to share all your sorrow."

A load was taken from his heart too, although he was hardly conscious of it. He made room for Marie to sit beside him, returned her caresses, and no longer seemed to shrink from her expressions of affection. Gently, gradually she led him to speak of the past, even of the day which had seen the beginning of all his

misery. And she saw, that so far from seeking to excuse himself by exaggerating the strength of the temptation, he seemed morbidly afraid that she should seek to speak a false peace to him, when she alluded to all he had suffered before he had yielded. He seemed to take a certain pleasure in thinking as ill of himself as possible ; nay, even to think worse of himself than was true. At first, she tried gently to combat this tendency to excessive self-condemnation. But when she saw that argument only irritated him, and made him more obstinate in his own opinion, she desisted, and contented herself with encouraging him to speak more openly and fully of all he felt.

He told her it was not at first that he felt the depth of his wretchedness. At first he was like a man stunned, who could neither understand what has happened, nor appreciate its importance. But gradually this torpor passed away, and then each month, each week increased his remorse, until he felt as if he could not bear the anguish of his mind for another day, another hour.

“ Often,” he said, “ have I resolved to end the contest and my life at once ; but always, when the moment came, my courage failed,—not through fear for myself, I could not be worse than I am—not through any vain hope of ever being better prepared to die ; were I to live a thousand years, I could never be nearer God’s favour and pardon than I am now,—but I had not the courage to take from you, Marie, your last hope of my repentance. And yet,” checking himself, “ it seems that I am even now trying to do that thing.”

“ But you have not, you never can do it,” she answered eagerly. “ Oh ! my dear husband, why cannot you see that the God who has blessed you with a sense

of your sin, who has kept you from hardness of heart, is ready to perfect that which concerneth you, and to give you pardon and peace?"

But with all the pertinacity of despair he rejected her words, and entreated her not to argue further.

" You cannot convince me, knowing what I know, feeling what I feel here," laying his hand on his heart, " and unless you knew and felt what I do, I could not convince you. Let us leave that matter now—suffer me to go on—I wish to tell you what particularly wounded me to-day."

He said that for the last week, since Father Joseph had been ill, and he had been left more alone, allowed more time to think and feel, his misery had increased terribly; and on this morning, which had been a particularly fine one, he had felt as if the bright sunshine, the song of the birds, the merry voices of his own children, every sight or sound of happiness only aggravated his sense of suffering beyond endurance. And he had taken a long solitary walk, hoping, by exhausting his strength, to deaden his sensibility to pain; but he found, on the contrary, that the more the body suffered from weariedness, the deeper and blacker grew the depression on his spirit; and at last completely worn out with the contest, he had sat down on the fallen trunk of a tree, feeling that he might never have strength to reach home.

He had sat there some time, gloomy, abstracted, observing nothing, when his ear was caught by the sound of cart wheels and horses' feet on the little road close to him. He rose quickly to go away in the other direction, anxious to avoid meeting any one, when he saw the driver of the cart was Pierre Lajou, one of his own

tenants, and a man in whom he felt a peculiar kind of interest from the similarity of their situations. Pierre had been a zealous Protestant, a devoted Christian, but like Theodore, he had fallen in the day of trial, while, like Marie, his wife had held fast her constancy. A strong undefined feeling of curiosity, interest, sympathy, induced Theodore to remain and watch this man, all the more that he could read in his haggard countenance, downcast eye, slouching figure, and listless gait, a clear transcript of his own feelings. The grain in the rye-field where Theodore stood, was cut down, and Pierre had come to cart it away. The Count drew himself up behind a tree as the cart and its driver passed close to him; but it was a needless precaution. Pierre never looked round, and seemed indifferent to, and unobservant of, everything. He went with a kind of mechanical precision about his work, and had nearly filled his cart, when a sudden impulse seemed to seize him. He let fall the sheaf he had raised on his fork, and after standing a moment motionless, threw himself on his face on the ground.

“Never before did I know what envy was,” Theodore said, with a trembling voice, “for, Marie, I saw he was praying, and I cannot pray. At first it seemed a silent wrestling with his own heart, then words came forth, vague, confused cries for mercy, which seemed to cut my heart in pieces, for my dumb soul cannot cry, never shall cry again. Then these changed into full, humble confession of sin, and gradually,—oh happy, oh blessed man! that was succeeded by passionate pleading for mercy, for pardon. He pleaded God’s own promises—he entreated Him for his own sake, for His mercy, for His truth’s sake, to wash out his sins

in the Lamb's blood. But when he began in a voice broken with tears to thank God for His mercy, I could stand it no longer, I rose and fled home, feeling that I should gladly have given all I possess to be only as wretched as I was when I entered that field."

And again his head was bowed down on his hands, and he groaned aloud. As well as she could command her voice, Marie again spoke words of comfort, reminding him that Pierre could only obtain pardon through Christ's merits, and that His merits were such as no depth of sinfulness could overpass. But again he bade her cease, though this time less harshly, and she thought less gloomily, than before. He went on to finish his story.

The comparison between the pardoned man's state and his own, had weighed like an intolerable burden on his heart all day. He had gone with Marie to hear the children read, with the conviction that he could only hear what would increase his despair—a conviction, he said, perfectly fulfilled. Every word fell like burning lead upon his heart, until at last, when Hortense read those noble words of the believing Jews, he could no longer suppress the expression of his feelings, and that groan had burst from him which had so alarmed them all.

"Do not call my agony repentance, Marie—repentance it is not. It is merely the natural agony of one who sees others enjoy a blessing which is for ever beyond his reach. One consequence of to-day's scene may, however, comfort you. After being the witness of God's goodness and grace to that poor sinner, I can never again dishonour Him as I have done—I have been at mass for the last time."

Marie's heart leapt for joy at these words ; spoken as they were, she could not doubt their sincerity. She asked him what he intended to do.

"It is not befitting such a wretch as I am," he said, sadly and humbly, "to make an open confession of the faith—such an honour would be too high for me. I shall merely stay away from all idolatrous ceremonies, and suffer Father Joseph to demand an explanation when he pleases. It would not become me to offer one."

Marie's first feeling at this change in her husband was that of unmixed thankfulness ; but after a little, natural fears for his safety began to arise. As a relapsed Protestant, he could expect no mercy—no rank or influence could protect him, and she trembled to think of what might be before him.

"I know it, Marie," he said calmly, when she spoke of her fears, "but it was my own sin which placed me in this position, and it is fitting I should bear the increased suffering it brings upon me."

"But why brave such suffering ?" Marie cried eagerly. "Oh, Theodore ! let us fly at once. Let us leave this place—this country. Let me wake the children, and we can go at once."

"Go at once ! and how, my dear Marie ?" he asked with a melancholy smile.

"As we are—on foot, any way—only let us lose no time ; let us go now this very night—in five minutes I can be ready."

"On foot ! you and the children on foot ! You, who never walked a mile in your life—whose foot never trod a rougher path than your own grass walks and terraces ?"

Marie thought of her lonely midnight journeys to the conventicles in the forest ; but of these Theodore knew nothing. Dreading for him the trying ordeal of confession, she had been careful to conceal every transaction of hers which could in any way compromise him with the priests. And although he had of course observed her occasional mysterious absence during the greater part of the night, he had never imagined the truth—could not indeed have believed that she could have either strength or courage for such an adventure, but had always supposed these hours were given to private reading and prayer, at a time when there was no eye to watch, no intruder to disturb her. Marie's own remembrance of these expeditions had, however, the effect of lessening her confidence in her power to endure fatigue. She thought of the excessive exhaustion she had felt, remembered the weary, painful, staggering step with which she had always ended her walk, her total unfitness for any exertion for days after, and felt painfully how impossible it would be to keep up day after day, under all the fatigue their flight must entail.

"But at all events," she urged, "let us at once arrange a plan by which we can get away. Surely something can be done."

"Such a plan might be found, I dare say, my dear Marie," he said decidedly, "but I cannot think of flight. It is my duty to remain where I am, and bear whatever God sees fit to send upon me. I delude myself with no vain hope that any suffering can expiate the past—that any constancy in a wretch like me can be acceptable in His eyes. But still, to take patiently what He appoints, is my duty, and I cannot again sin against Him in refusing it."

Marie tried to combat this false sense of duty by every argument in her power, and entreated him for his children's sake to fly and save his life, that he might be able to care for and protect them. But argument and entreaty were equally powerless. The one he met with counter arguments, specious if not sound. The other he turned from as a temptation to leave the right path.

One plea alone remained; and with a trembling, timid heart, Marie determined to try it.

"You are then willing," she said solemnly, "to run the risk of a second apostasy?"

Fire flashed from his eyes, a burning flush of anger rose to his very forehead. But it was immediately succeeded by an expression of the deepest self-abasement.

"I have no right to expect that you should trust in my sincerity," he said mournfully.

"I have the fullest trust in the sincerity of your intentions, my own dear husband," she answered with the utmost tenderness. "But if you fell in the hour of trial before, when you had the joy of God's presence and favour to uphold you, ah! can you hope to persevere now, when, as you say, all that strength and comfort are withdrawn?"

He seemed to feel the force of her words, and she hastened to confirm the impression she had made.

"As to your scruples that our flight might be a sinful avoidance of God's appointed cross," she said, "surely there is little foundation for it. To leave for ever a home so dear as this, to go out from the land of our fathers, is no pleasant thing. The life of wanderers, outcast, destitute, friendless in a foreign land, can be

no life of ease. And could death itself be more bitter than it must be to leave our darling boy alone in this land, in prison, danger, and sorrow?" She could say no more. Her own courage failed at such a thought.

Could she have seen into her husband's inmost heart, she could have chosen no better way to overcome his scruples than that she had taken. He was quite sincere in saying that he had no hope his sufferings could expiate the past sin. But, unconsciously to himself, the prospect of martyrdom was pleasant to him as a means to restore him to his own self-esteem. And to shew forth the dangers and trials of flight was the best way to induce him to consent to fly. Already his imagination began to busy itself in painting the sorrows, the difficulties, and privations such a step must involve. And already his spirits began to rise, his self-complacency to revive, at the prospect of meeting and enduring them, rather than sin against God.

Differently were Marie's thoughts employed. The picture of her boy's desolation of feeling when he should hear they were gone, the thought of all that might happen to him while they were far away, completely filled her mind and agonized her heart.

And yet, what good could they do him if they remained? In the event of Theodore's remaining constant, Eugène, as well as the little girls, must, she knew, be for ever deprived of both parents. And that her husband should again purchase freedom for himself and her by apostasy, was an evil more to be dreaded than any other that could befall them. Free, and in a foreign land, they might be able to help their boy. Here they could do nothing.

So spoke reason. But feeling, too, must have her

sway, and although it could not blind Marie's conviction of what was their duty, or shake her resolution to adhere to it, yet it could and did rend her heart with the most cruel apprehensions, the most bitter pain. And when, after a long silence, Theodore began to speak of plans for flight, she started in a kind of panic at the bare thought that her own wish was to be realized, that what she had so urgently pressed upon her husband, he was ready to adopt.

Had any one asked Theodore the question, he would have strenuously denied that there was the least lightening of that black cloud of despair which had so long oppressed him. But nevertheless it was really so. His heart was relieved by the free communication of his feelings to Marie. And animated by the prospect of exchanging the dead, passive, misery of the last twelve-months for active exertion, and even for active suffering, he looked and spoke like the eager, enthusiastic, Theodore of other days. It was he who was hopeful and fearless now. It was Marie who was hesitating and cast down. And long after he had gone to bed and fallen asleep, she remained upon her knees, wrestling for submission to God's will, pleading for faith, courage, and guidance for herself and for him who was dearer to her than self.



CHAPTER VII.

ZEENA.



AD any doubts remained on Theodore's mind as to the propriety of fleeing from temptation, they would have been dissipated by the results of his first interview with Father Joseph. This took place about a week after the conversation I have narrated. And when in the course of it, allusion was made to the Count's late neglect of his religious duties, he found himself, to his surprise and mortification, evading all direct answer, hesitating and prevaricating, instead of coming forward as he had planned, with an explicit avowal of the change in his intentions. This experience of his own weakness, while it strengthened his resolution to fly, and quickened his desire to do so without delay, at the same time made him less able to devise or carry out the necessary arrangements. In the overthrow of his lately restored self-confidence was involved the loss of all energy and hope. And listless, gloomy, and desponding, he left to Marie the task of making plans, and preparing for their accomplishment. Happily no long space was allowed for these depressing influences to work. They had soon good ground to know that their flight must be immediate, or not at all.

On the evening of the day following that on which Father Joseph had reproved Theodore's non-attendance

at chapel, Marie, her husband, and children, were together in the flower garden at the side of the château. The children had drawn their father forward to shew him a new flower, and Marie was following slowly, when, as she passed a thick clump of tall shrubs, she felt something slightly catch her dress. Supposing it to be the branch of a tree, she turned to disentangle herself, when she was startled to see a pair of wild bright eyes looking at her through an opening in the shrubs, and to perceive that it was the hand belonging to these same eyes which had caught her robe. Her first impulse was to scream aloud for her husband. But she had learned presence of mind and self-restraint in a hard school, and after looking round to make sure that he was within call, she turned again, looked steadily at the eyes, and asked in a low but firm voice, who was there?

“Do you not know me, lady?” was the answer in a peculiar accent. And the thick foliage was parted so as to give her a better view of the concealed person’s face.

Marie at once recognised a gipsy, or as they called them in France, a Bohemian woman, to whom she had lately been of great service. It was about six weeks before this time that Marie in returning home from a midnight preaching had occasion to pass through one of the wildest and most desolate parts of the forest belonging to the château. Her fellow-worshippers had one by one turned off to their own homes. Alone, unprotected, the darkness increasing the reality as well as the apprehension of danger, she was hastening on as rapidly as fatigue and the impediments in the way would admit, when, to her inexpressible alarm, she heard a loud rustling among the trees by her side. The dread

which first occurred to chill her heart and blanch her cheek, was of wolves. But at this season they seldom ventured so near the dwellings of man, and a momentary flash of light among the leaves dispelled that apprehension, to make way for others hardly less terrible, of priestly spies, or reckless robbers who might murder her for the sake of her rich dress and ornaments. While she hesitated whether to draw back and try to hide herself among the trees, or to go softly on, hoping to escape unseen and unheard, the branches immediately in front of her were parted, and a figure came out on the path. It was a woman, this same gipsy. She held a small lantern, and its light flashing fitfully upon her dark, fierce countenance, her long straight hair and strange dress increased the wildness of her whole appearance. Still she was a woman. There was comfort in the thought. And that she was a gipsy rather lessened than increased Marie's fear.

These poor outcasts of the human race had always been objects of interest and pity at Beauchardis. The Marquis was always ready and zealous to do good to all within his reach. And to his generous, I might say chivalrous spirit, to be oppressed and despised was a sure passport to his help and protection. From him Marie had early learned to shew kindness to a race feared, avoided, or persecuted by others. No gipsy ever left the château of Blancard without their wants supplied. No gipsy encampment was ever dislodged from the place it had taken up upon the Count's grounds. And whenever either he or his wife met any of the wanderers, they were sure to give them kind and gentle words and looks, if not more substantial proofs of their interest. The gipsies are not an ungrateful people.

After the fashion of their race all these deeds of kindness were recorded from one wandering party to another, until there was hardly a member of their body in all France who had not learned to look upon the two houses of Beauchardis and Blancard with gratitude and respect. And these feelings were legible on the countenance and manner of the woman who now addressed Marie.

"Do not be afraid, lady," she said, trying to soften her harsh voice. "Do not be afraid, it is Zeena who speaks; and she would sooner cut off her right hand than hurt a hair of the head of her who protects and succours her people. I knew it was you, lady. I saw you pass our camp three hours ago. I knew where you had gone; and when I heard the soft foot fall, I said to myself, It is the gentle one coming back."

"And what do you want with me, good Zeena?" Marie asked, a little tremulously. "Can I do you any good?"

"Good! Ah, lady! the greatest in the world, if you are willing." A groan of great agony from the thicket near them interrupted her. Marie started in horror. A look of anguish came over the gipsy's face.

"It is my boy," she cried passionately; "my own bright boy; my firstborn—the sunshine of my life—the treasure of my heart!"

"And what is the matter?" Marie asked,—all personal fear forgotten in sympathy for the mother's grief. "How can I help you?"

"Lady, he has fallen from the top of a high rock, and is fearfully hurt. He did not come home. I went to seek him, and found him crushed—bruised—his leg

broken. Oh, my boy, my boy!" she exclaimed in agony, as another deep groan reached their ears. "Lady, I cannot leave him! I cannot carry him to the camp alone. Will you send me help?"

"I will, I will!" Marie cried eagerly, starting forward at a rapid pace towards the château. "Some of our men shall be here as soon as possible." But the gipsy stopped her.

"Dear lady," she said with a half smile, even in that moment exulting in the knowledge she possessed of the other's position and circumstances,—a knowledge her race prided themselves in. "Dear lady, how can you allow your people to know where you have been? And even if you could, they must know nothing about us. The monks have vowed vengeance against us for some small thefts from their farm-yard, and your servants are all the paid spies of the monks. No, if you wish to help us, you will go to the camp, and send my people here."

"To the camp!" Marie exclaimed; "oh, I dare not."

"Nay, lady, not one of our people would lift a finger, would raise an eyelid against you or yours. It is but a quarter of an hour's distance from here—not so much; and the road is safe—quite safe, or Zeena would not have asked you."

"But how can I find the path?"

"See here, lady;" and the gipsy made way for Marie to pass among the branches at the side of the road; and, throwing forward the light of her lantern, she shewed her a narrow winding path leading into the heart of the wood.

Marie shrank in irrepressible dread from the very

thought of undertaking such an enterprise. The light of the lantern illuminated only a small space, making the dense wood beyond look more dark and dreary by contrast. And if she were frequently in danger of losing her way in the straight beaten path she was accustomed to pursue, how could she hope to keep it in an intricate strange one like this?

"Oh, I cannot go!" she cried in great agitation. "It is impossible—I cannot." A groan, or rather a shriek of pain, from the poor sufferer, checked the words.

"O lady!" cried the poor mother, "you, too, have a son; for his sake will you not save my boy?"

"I will, I will!" Marie cried, overcome by such a plea. "Only tell me where to go."

"You cannot miss the path. The trees on each side are so close, the bushes so thick, you could not make your way through them if you would. You must go on till you come to the old quarry; you cannot mistake it. In this light it will be like a great mountain. If you have seen or heard nothing before you come there, stand still, and call 'Dibon.' My husband will come to you. Tell him what has happened: he will know what to do. Take the lantern, you will need it more than I do."

Marie would not allow herself time to hesitate, but set out at once on her difficult journey. It was a difficult one in truth. Unaccustomed to the use of a lantern, its feeble, flickering light was more a hindrance than a help. She was constantly and unconsciously changing its direction, and then starting violently, or stopping suddenly short, at the deep shade she herself had cast on her path. She got on but slowly, and her fears making the time seem longer than it was, she

began to think she must have lost the right road, and have passed the quarry. Just as these apprehensions were deepening into certainty, a sudden turn brought her directly in front of what she sought. As the gipsy had said, it looked gigantic in the feeble light. At the same time, Marie heard a low whistle behind her. It was answered by a similar one in front. There was a crashing of branches, and a voice demanded, "Who is there?" so close to her side, that Marie could not repress a slight scream of alarm.

The gruff challenge was instantly succeeded by an exclamation of surprise: "The lady from the château at this time?" for Marie in her efforts to make her lantern shew her who spoke, had only succeeded in throwing a brilliant illumination over her own person.

"Are you Dibon?" she asked tremulously.

"I am, lady. What can Dibon do for you?"

Marie hurriedly told her errand.

"My poor boy!" the father said, with much feeling. Then coming forward, and taking Marie's hand with an air of respectful gratitude, he continued: "And you, gentle one, came all this way alone to tell the poor father. How can Dibon thank you? Come with me for a moment," and he led her gently forward within the bushes.

She found herself in a small open spot of ground. The deserted quarry inclosed it on three sides, a thick row of brushwood and young trees on the fourth. A small fire burned on the ground in one corner,—an overhanging rock concealing its light from the path. There were two young men before the fire, and a third, the one whose whistle Marie had first heard, followed his father and her.

" You tremble, lady. Your hand is very cold; your cheek is very pale," said the gipsy, looking closely at her, when the full light of the fire fell upon them. " You do not fear Dibon ?"

" No," Marie answered, hardly able to keep back a burst of hysterical tears. " But I am very much fatigued, and I am not accustomed to walk alone, and at such an hour."

" True, true, and it must not be," he said eagerly; and, turning to the other men, he gave some orders in a language she did not understand. Two of them instantly disappeared round an angle of the rock; the third, a fine-looking boy of about sixteen, came up to her, and gently took from her the lantern she held.

" I must go to my poor boy, lady," said Dibon; " but Michaut shall take you home by a nearer road. Trust to him. There is not one of our race would harm the least thing belonging to you."

Marie looked anxiously in the boy's face. Though dark and wild, the expression was good, and she felt she might trust him. Nor was her confidence misplaced. He led her by a road much shorter than the one she knew. He watched to throw the light before her feet, and to remove impediments from her path; and when he saw that her steps faltered from fatigue, he offered her the support of his shoulder to lean upon, with a modest grace that might have become any noble of the land.

After this night Marie had several times made her way to the quarry to ask for the sick boy, and had oftener still seen Zeena, who used to come to an appointed spot to receive little luxuries for him, and to bring Marie the report of his condition. Bernard was the

only one of the servants whom the gipsies would suffer to approach their place of concealment ; but he for some time went daily to carry such comforts as even their thievish talents could not procure. The boy had been very much hurt, but the gipsies are excellent nurses : he recovered more rapidly than could have been expected. His father, anxious to leave the neighbourhood of the monastery, had enlarged their small covered cart, so as to let him lie in it at full length ; and Marie having understood that they were to go away some days before this, was proportionably surprised to see Zeena.

“ Is your boy worse ? ” she asked eagerly. “ Is there anything I can do for you ? ”

“ No, no, lady ; not for me. It is no want of mine that has brought me here. But, lady, you and your husband are in great danger. I came to warn you. I must speak to you both alone, and that soon.”

Marie was puzzled. She could not take the gipsy to the house ; neither would it be safe to stand and speak to her there. They were every moment liable to interruption.

“ Hear, lady,” said the gipsy, after a moment’s thought, “ this will do. In two hours the sun will have set. It will be quite dark. Do you and your husband come up to the top of the old ruined tower, I shall meet you there. None of the servants will venture near that place after dark ; and that old man who used to bring messes for my boy can watch while we speak. But some one comes. I must go. Remember, in two hours.”

Marie looked round to see who was coming, and when she turned back to the shrubs, the space through

which had gleamed the bright eyes of the gipsy was vacant; there was neither sight nor sound to tell that any one was or had been there.

It was one of the gardeners who had interrupted them, one who, as Marie well knew, was engaged to watch her every action. Her hurried dialogue with the gipsy had not lasted more than a minute, but yet she felt that even for that short time her attitude of attention at such a place must have seemed mysterious to any one who might have observed her. She resolved to dispel any suspicion the man might entertain. She stepped back a step or two, still looking intently at the mass of evergreens, and when he came up, she called him to her side.

"Those shrubs ought to be cut, I think," she said; "they are not nearly so compact as they used to be; see here, and here, and there," and she pointed out a few blanks in the wall of green.

"I think," she continued, "they might look very well cut like those on the other side of the garden, let us go and look at them—we shall then be better able to judge."

And she led him to a distant part of the grounds, and detained him there, first with an earnest discussion upon the best mode of pruning shrubs, then by giving him minute directions about a new flower-bed she wished him to make, entering with animation into the question of the comparative merits of different shapes of flower-beds in general, and the suitability of one in particular, to the spot in question.

The man was surprised at the interest she showed in the business; he had always thought her shamefully indifferent to everything of the kind. Poor Marie! he

had not known you in your happy days ! He could not understand her sudden interest ; but it would have required a quicker wit than his to connect it with the suspicions which had risen in his mind, as he had watched her bending so intently forward to so uninteresting an object as a mass of shrubs.

When she had said all she could find to say upon the matter, and thought she had allowed Zeena time to escape, Marie dismissed her attendant, and went to join her husband and children. She met them coming to seek her.

"Mamma," cried Hortense, "we could not think where you were."

"Could you not, my dear?" she said absently. While with the gardener she had schooled her countenance and manner so as to appear unconcerned and at ease ; but now that the immediate pressure was removed, she betrayed to her husband the anxiety that weighed on her mind.

"What is wrong, Marie?" he asked in a low voice.

"I cannot tell you while they are here," looking at the children.

She glanced impatiently up at the sun. Restless, eager to know the worst, it seemed as if the time of suspense would never be done. And yet she had much to do before the interview could take place. She had to prepare her husband for it, to give Bernard the directions as to the part he was to take, to get rid of the children, and to devise a feasible mode of eluding the watchfulness of the servants while keeping her appointment. These two last matters presented no small difficulty. On this particular evening Marguerite was from home visiting a sister. She was not expected to return

till the next morning, and Ninette was the children's only attendant for the night. Since a suspicious dread of her had been implanted in their minds by Bernard, Marie had been careful never to leave them alone with her. She had got into the custom of staying with them every night until they fell asleep ; and she knew not how to break through this custom without assigning a reason, which, if repeated by them, might excite suspicion in Ninette's mind ; and even if the children were safely disposed of, how could she and her husband remain out of doors in a dark, chill autumn night, without awakening the curiosity of some of the spies by whom they were surrounded, and exciting them to investigate into the cause of so unusual a procedure ?

While she anxiously considered these questions, she walked silent and abstracted by her husband's side. After he had watched her for a few minutes, he sent the children off in a race, and then again asked her what had happened.

She told him all she knew. The prospect of immediate and certain danger seemed to arouse his spirit and energy.

“ I think we can manage it all,” he said after a moment's pause. “ Hortense, Aimée,” calling to the little girls who were coming back breathless, and smiling to tell the issue of their race, “ run to the house and desire the servants to send Bernard to me. Bid him bring his axe, saw, hammer, and some strong nails—I must get him to alter that arch,” turning to Marie, and pointing to the opening into a covered walk formed of different kind of creepers trained over a light framework. “ It offends my eye very much ; and Bernard

is the only man about the place who has taste and sense to put it right."

This order excited no surprise. Bernard was the acknowledged favourite of his master. His expertness in all kinds of handicraft was well known, and he was frequently applied to for help in similar matters by all members of the family.

He soon appeared, Theodore went with him to the arch, and they remained there for a considerable time, taking down, putting up, sawing, nailing, &c. &c. Marie sat down on a seat not far off—she sent the children numerous errands to different parts of the garden, both to amuse them and to keep them out of their father's way; but she herself felt too anxious, too uneasy to be able to leave the spot. The sun had set—she felt sure the two hours must be more than past, and still Theodore remained working, talking, and apparently thinking of nothing but his work. The suspense and anxiety were getting insupportable, when he turned towards her, saying aloud,—

"There, Bernard, that is all we can do to-night, it is quite dark. Marie," coming up to her, "the evening star is shining most beautifully behind those trees, shall we go up to the top of the old tower and look at it?"

"And we go too, papa?" cried the children.

Marie was going to refuse this request, but their father acquiesced at once, only making the condition that they were to go away without remonstrance whenever their mamma thought it too cold for them.

"Shall I bid Ninette bring cloaks for my lady and the young ladies?—the air will be very cold up there," said Bernard.

"Yes, do," was the Count's answer. "Tell her to come after us, we shall go slowly on."

Marie could not understand the plan; but she could not ask an explanation, and took her husband's arm in silence. The stair in the tower was quite dark—the children were in great glee at the excitement and novelty of their position, and their young clear voices rang merrily through the old tower, as they went up clinging to their father and mother, and laughing at their frequent stumbles and difficulties. The door of Eugène's prison stood partly open; the comparative lightness of the room caught their eye, and Hortense asked her mother what place it was. Marie answered carelessly, quite unconscious of the thrilling interest the small chamber ought to have possessed for her.

They went up to the top, and passed out through the little door on to the battlemented roof. Ninette followed immediately after them; Bernard, in his politeness, escorted her, and there seemed to be a good deal of jesting and smothered laughter between them as they came up. When Ninette tied on the little girls' cloaks, she laughingly whispered that the wicked Bernard had been trying to frighten her with fearful stories about ghosts, adding that she would not for the world go down that stair alone at night.

"I should not be afraid," said little Aimée; "God can take care of me in the night as well as in the day."

"Yes," gravely interposed Hortense, "God says that the darkness and the light are both alike to Him. They should be both alike to us too, for God is always taking care of us."

Ninette crossed herself at the sound of words she

supposed were from the Bible. Aimée looked at her in innocent wonder. She had often seen the same mystical action before without understanding it. With a little childish laugh she began to imitate Ninette's gesture, when her mother observing it, called her in sudden terror to her side. To make the sign of the cross was to profess the Catholic religion, and the merest child who was tempted to make it, even in sport, was from that moment in the power of the Church. Marie had often forbidden the girls to imitate this gesture, knowing that Ninette used every device to tempt them to it; and Aimée fancying that her mamma's agitated manner proceeded from displeasure at her disobedience, ran to her at once to beg for pardon, and plead forgetfulness. Of course, Ninette was not intended to know of the prohibition; and in order to stop such inopportune apologies, and to divert the children's minds, Theodore began to point out to them the various groups of stars now shining brightly in the fast darkening sky, to tell them some of the wonders about their real magnitude and distance, and in his own poetic style to describe some of the strange scenes in various ages and various countries, upon which these silent stars had looked down.

The love of astronomy had been quite a passion with him. And in former times he had taken great pleasure in endeavouring, by such lessons, to imbue his children with a similar taste. It was to Marie like a return to these happy days, to stand leaning on her husband's arm, listening to the glowing, eloquent language in which his thoughts naturally clothed themselves, and watching the interest with which the little ones listened, and the intelligence with which they grasped and en-

tered into his ideas and feelings. For the moment she forgot all anxiety, forgot the cause of their being there, forgot to dread the gipsy's appearing among them, or to watch for it.

Theodore mentioned the beautiful cross of the southern hemisphere.

"Oh," cried Hortense, "Bernard has told us of that, Bernard has seen it. He saw it when he went that long voyage with grandpapa, that he likes to tell us about. Tell us what you saw, Bernard. Where is Bernard?" looking round.

"He went down again immediately, Mademoiselle," said Ninette. "He said he was going to saw off an ugly, rough beam, which might make you trip in the darkness. And he has been at it ever since. Have you not observed the tiresome sound of his harsh saw going incessantly?"

As she spoke the sound ceased, and in another minute Bernard was with them.

"I came up to be ready to carry down Mademoiselle Aimée, whenever Madame might think fit to send the little ladies away," he said.

"Yes, yes, it is quite time you should go, children," said the Count, hastily.

They remonstrated, and entreated for permission to remain, but their father was peremptory, and seemed impatient to get them away.

"It is so pleasant up here," sighed Hortense. "Dear papa, we shall come again, shall we not? You will bring us soon again, will you not? To-morrow night, perhaps?"

"Yes, yes, to-morrow night, any night you please, only go now," was the hurried answer.

"Oh, how charming!" they both cried. "Ninette, Bernard, we are to come here to-morrow night, any night we please. Is it not charming?"

Poor children! they little thought that they should never again stand on that tower, never again look forth on that starlit scene. But to go on.

Marie remarked the nervous hurry of her husband's manner. She at once understood that Bernard's coming up was a preconcerted signal of the gipsy's approach, and her heart beat quick at the apprehension, that Ninette might meet her on the stairs. With trembling haste she kissed the children, and dismissed them, straining every faculty to catch the slightest sound, longing that the children's prattle might cease, so that she might hear better; and yet, when a momentary lull did occur, she grew sick with the dread that the stillness might last long enough to deceive the gipsy into the belief that she might come up.

Ninette went down stairs first, holding Hortense by the hand. Bernard followed with Aimée in his arms. Hortense was next the door into the little room; and when she felt the vacant space of the doorway, she paused a moment, and looked in.

"How is that door shut now?" she asked. "It was open when we passed before."

Bernard stepped hastily forward, and setting his back against the door, cried, laughing—

"Shut! Of course it is: I shut it. If I had not, we should never have been able to get Mademoiselle Ninette to pass it. She is so afraid of the ghosts that sleep there. Twenty fair ladies all in a row, without their heads."

"Twenty! O Bernard!" and the little girls laughed merrily.

All this was heard by the watchers above. Marie felt her husband start and tremble as Hortense's exclamation fell upon his ear. The gipsy must, then, be in that room, and Bernard's ghost stories had been intended to check Ninette's curiosity and desire to explore its recesses. Marie listened for a minute or two in breathless expectation.

"They are safe out of the tower," she whispered as she heard Bernard say something about the stars.

"Hush," he answered, "she is here."

And, looking towards the door, Marie saw the tall form of the gipsy for an instant, between her and the sky. So noiseless was her tread, and so instantaneously did she again disappear, that Marie half thought her imagination had deceived her. But Theodore led her forward, and they found Zeena seated on the leaden roof under a battlement, so that the appearance of a third figure might not arouse the curiosity of any chance watcher from below. She directed Marie and Theodore not to stand still looking at her, but to walk about near enough to hear her low tones, to look up at the stars, and point them out to each other, with as natural gestures as they could. When all was arranged as she wished, she at once began her tale, and told it in as few words as possible.

Her boy, she said, had not gained strength so fast as they had expected. They had not been able to leave when the rest of their party did. It was only the preceding morning that she, with her sick boy and Michaut, had set out, leaving her husband and other son to go in

a different direction, for some private reason which she did not explain. They went no farther than to the neighbourhood of a town about ten miles off, where some friends were encamped, and where they purposed to pass the night. Soon after their arrival, Michaut went into the town to get a fowl, fresh eggs, or other dainty for the sick boy's supper. The Vicar-General of the district lived here ; and as ecclesiastical larders are proverbially well furnished, it was his premises that Michaut chose for his first attempt. While prowling about, he saw Father Joseph arrive. Poor Father Joseph ! he had hard work. He had effected considerable reform in his monastery, but had not, as yet, infused sufficient zeal into the hearts of his subordinates, to make it safe to intrust difficult work, or delicate negotiations to their hands. He had to do everything himself, from accompanying soldiers on their converting expeditions, to carrying reports to the Vicar-General of the constancy of the new-made converts.

Knowing the monk's hostility to his people, Michaut's first idea was, that the reverend superior had traced himself and his party to this spot, and had come to warn his ecclesiastical brother against them. He resolved to hear all that passed.

" We people of the forest and heath," said the gipsy, a little proudly, " know most things. My boy has been in that house before. He knows where every room lies. He soon got under the window of the private study. The afternoon was sultry. The window was open. He heard nearly every word. The matter was not about poor wanderers like us, but about Monsieur le Comte. The priest had complaints to make. My boy did not understand well what they

meant; but that signifies nothing. You had never been a sincere convert, he said, and were now inclined to go back even the few steps you had taken. The matter was serious but not hopeless. He knew you well. Decided measures were all that was necessary, all that could do any good. Force you to one other act contrary to your conscience, and the battle was gained, your courage gone for ever. Suffer you to resist successfully only once, and all was lost. You would learn to think well of yourself, and from such thoughts came your only strength."

There was a slight shade of contempt in her manner. Evidently the Count's character, as drawn by the monk, was not to her taste. As little did the description please Theodore. His eyes flashed with anger: he muttered between his teeth, that Father Joseph should see he was not so easily managed. The gipsy took no notice of his emotion, but went on.

"They laid their plans. To-morrow is a great festival in the Church. You are to be forced to attend it. Father Joseph is to-day to give the head magistrate such information regarding you, as shall induce him to send a party of soldiers to-morrow morning, either to escort you to the church, or to carry you before him to answer for your conduct."

"To-morrow morning! Oh, Theodore, so soon!" cried Marie, clinging tremblingly to her husband.

He drew himself up erect, composed. The monks and magistrates should see that he was not what they fancied him to be. He was no passive tool in their hands. The gipsy finished her story.

"I came back here at once to tell you this. I arrived early in the night. I lingered about the woods

hoping a happy chance might have taken you, lady, to the night church, and that I might meet you. When I did not, I sought my husband, made everything ready to help you, and came back in the evening, hoping to get an opportunity to speak to you. We have done it well. That old man is clever. His bringing the girl up among you, secured you from all suspicion, and the noise of his saw insured my getting to the room unheard. But the question is now, are you willing to fly the danger, or do you mean to yield to it?"

Poor Theodore! she did not give you credit for the other alternative of braving and resisting it.

Marie eagerly urged immediate flight, but Theodore hesitated. Again the prospect of martyrdom was becoming alluring to him. Now was the time to shew his courage and constancy;—but then his wife, his children. Marie must be involved in his ruin; and their little ones should then be at the mercy of the priests. He could not leave them in charge of Protestant friends, for by the law no Protestant could be a guardian. Even little Aimée's innocent action of that evening was recollected as adding to the peril of her situation; and this circumstance, small as it was, caused the balance to turn. Even if Father Joseph's plans for the morrow failed, Ninette might at any moment carry such a report of this matter as might cause the child to be claimed as a Catholic, and taken from them for ever. He could not risk it. He would fly, he said, if he could.

"O yes, we can; and now at once!" Marie exclaimed, drawing her cloak around her, and turning towards the door. "Let us get away from here—all will be easy after that."

The gipsy caught her dress.

"Stay, lady," she said; "listen to what I propose. The Count de Mercœur is now at Saintfont—is he not?"

"Is he? Perhaps he is—I believe he is," Theodore answered absently. His thoughts were not then with the Count de Mercœur.

"That is a good twelve hours' journey from this," Zeena went on. "You and the Count are very friendly, I know."

This was true. The warm-hearted old Count had always felt a strong interest in the young Blancards. He was a sincere and zealous Catholic. Warmly compassionating Theodore and Marie for all they had suffered, and honestly indignant at the means used to convert them, it had seemed to him that the best way of compensating for it all, was to endeavour to convert them in reality, and so give them the full benefit of what they had undergone. With this view he had, for the last twelvemonth, been a frequent visitor at Blancard, and had, by his open-heartedness, honesty, and warmth of feeling, gained a high place in the esteem and affection of both husband and wife. Of all this the gipsy seemed to have been aware, and on this part of her plans was founded.

"In about an hour from this time," she said, "a courier shall bring you a letter from the Count. He is ill, dying, and wishes to see you before he dies."

"How do you, how can you know this?" His tone was sharp and distrustful.

"Ah, how indeed!" she answered, with a low scornful laugh. His comprehension seemed so slow to her quick, inventive powers. "We may hope he is as

well as we are at this moment. All that concerns us is, that you should get the letter in proper time."

"But, Zeena," Marie interposed anxiously, "if your pretended courier do not wear the Mercœur livery, our servants might suspect something."

"So they might. But the livery he shall wear, that is no such difficult business. In the Count's absence, his servants have something more pleasant to do than to remain at home watching his property. It is not difficult to get into an empty house. If one of his grooms cannot find his clothes the next time he has to ride forth, it is no matter to us. To get the message delivered was more difficult. My boy can ride against any groom in the land; but in giving a long message, and answering questions, his tongue might have betrayed him. By a lucky chance, while seeking you, lady, in the forest, I came to the wood-cutter's hut, where lies hid the old man, who preaches in the dark night. I knew you could trust him. I told him all. He wrote the letter for me. You will get it in less than an hour. Go at once with the courier, and go alone. Make an excuse for leaving your servants behind. Trust yourself entirely to the boy: he is clever and true. He knows what to do, and how to do it. Do exactly as he bids you, and fear nothing.

"And, lady," turning to Marie, "I have a message from the white-haired old man for you. He said," speaking slowly, as if to recall each word, "Tell the lady, my prayers and blessings go with her. Bid her remember, that she 'shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty,' and that 'the Lord will provide.'"

The words fell on her sinking heart like the cool dew on the burnt up, withering grass.

“The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?” was her inward response. She pressed her husband’s arm still more closely; but it was with the instinctive desire to make him share her new-found confidence. She no longer trembled. His support was no longer absolutely necessary. He started. That pressure recalled his thoughts to her.

“Marie!” he exclaimed, “I cannot leave you behind—it is impossible!” And Marie’s heart echoed the “impossible.”

“For this night she must remain,” Zeena said decidedly. “You could not all go without exciting suspicion. The soldiers will be here about eleven to-morrow. It would be safest that you should stay quietly to receive them; but perhaps you could not be calm enough.”

“No; I am sure I could not,” she said eagerly. “At least, not unless my husband’s safety depends upon it.”

“Well, then, take the children to spend the day at the summer-house in the wood. I used often to see you there two or three years ago. From it you can see the château—can see the soldiers arrive. When they go away, come to me at the old quarry; but you must wait to see whether they are not coming to question you. If they do, you must meet them as best you can. If they set out at once on the road to Saintfont, you need lose no time, but come to me as quickly as possible.” And she added particular directions about the road from the summer-house to the quarry, concluding by saying peremptorily, “Now go, you have

been here too long ; the time is very near for the courier's arrival, and you must have much to do."

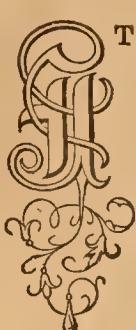
Much indeed ! They felt that. But one moment they must linger to cast one last look on all they were going to leave for ever. There was no moon : it was on the wane, and did not rise till the morning ; but it was a bright, clear, cold night. The stars shone almost as if through frost ; and the outline of the fine massive château was distinct against the sky. One long, loving look they both gave to it, and then turned in silence to go down stairs.

As they walked slowly to the house, Marie looked out into the darkness around, and trembled. Now she had her husband to lean upon, to guide her ; but what would it be when she had to go forth alone, with two helpless little ones depending on her ? "The Lord will provide,"—"I shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." On these words her soul rested, and was at peace.



CHAPTER VIII.

THE FLIGHT.

T was well they had little time to think—little time to realize their situation. At any moment the courier might arrive, and there was much to do.

First to settle their plans, so far as they could be settled, dependent as they both were on the will and management of others, ignorant how, where, or when they should meet again. To Amsterdam they wished to go. Marie's mother and sister were there; and there, she said, her father and brother would go if they ever obtained their freedom.

Poor Marie! she had by that time no father: his health had soon given way in the loathsome dungeon into which he had been thrown; but amidst all its horrors his spirit had held its confidence to the end. His hope in his God, his joy in His presence and favour, had burned bright and clear to the last moment. His death was triumphant. But of all this Marie knew nothing. The old man's dead body was suffered to remain for a fortnight among the living sharers of his dungeon; and then, when a sufficient number had followed him to make it worth the trouble, their corpses were thrown out like the carcases of dogs into the fosse around their prison, to add to the suffering of

those who survived ; and no farther notice was taken of his death. But to return to the Blancards.

In going to Holland, they might soon be in tolerable safety in Switzerland, for Blancard lay near the eastern frontier. Theodore arranged to wait for Marie at Geneva ; or, if she got there first, she must wait for him.

" But to leave you and the children to travel alone, O Marie ! how can I do it ? You who never in your life went half a mile except in your own coach, and surrounded by attendants. Marie, Marie ! I cannot. How can I ? "

Marie smiled sadly, and now for the first time told him of her midnight wanderings.

" The Lord took care of me then, dear Theodore," she said ; " and to Him I look to take care of us all now. I am not afraid ; but you must take money with you—let us see to that. What gold have you in the house ? "

There was not much—lamentably little indeed, considering that it must serve not only for the journey, but for their maintenance in the land of their exile. In the beginning of the persecution, it had been possible, though always difficult, to dispose of estates, and transmit the money to foreign countries ; but now, the middle of October 1685, the Edict of Nantes had just been revoked, and the laws against emigration had been made so fearfully severe, that any preparation for such a step must be attended with the greatest danger. In Theodore's case such preparation was, of course, impossible at any rate. Obliged to fly at an hour's notice, he could neither make arrangements himself, nor commission any friend to do so for him. All the property he could hope to secure was what he could

carry on his person. Marie had some valuable jewels, which were better suited for the purpose than gold could have been, and with a beating heart, and tremblingly alive to every sound, lest some one of the numerous spies might surprise her in the act, she sought out these jewels, and cutting open the collar, cuffs, and breast of his coat, she sewed up in them as much as he would consent to take. It was necessary to leave a proper proportion for herself, as they knew not when they should meet again.

Marie had just completed this work, and restored her jewel-box to its usual place, when a loud knocking at the hall door announced the arrival of the expected messenger. She turned very pale. The painful sickness of terror came over her. What if the gipsy had been mistaken? What if the soldiers were even now come? She had been far less moved on that evening when her persecutors had first actually stood before her. It was for her husband's life she had feared then. It was for his virtue she feared now. She was, however, the first to regain composure and presence of mind.

"We must not seem prepared," she said, "we must seem surprised. Let us summon the servants, and ask the cause of all this noise."

Before she could do so, the door opened, and the Count's valet came in with a letter.

"From the Count de Mercœur, Monseigneur."

"From the Count de Mercœur! Why, he is at Saintfont."

"Yes, Madame. The courier says he has galloped the whole way from Saintfont to bring the letter. He says the Count is dying, Madame."

"Dying! oh, I hope not!" and she turned to her husband, who had been reading the letter.

"I am afraid it is even so," putting it into her hand.
"And I must go to him at once."

"Oh, Theodore, not to-night! Surely you will not set out in the darkness?"

"I must, my love. It would be cruel to delay Read what he says.—Tell them to saddle Bayard immediately," (to the servant,) "and bring me my cloak and riding-boots."

His tone and manner were admirable,—just as hurried and decided as the occasion demanded. In the excitement of the moment all fear, all hesitation were gone.

The man left the room to obey, and returned presently with the cloak and boots. He was followed by one of the upper servants.

"Whom does Monseigneur choose to attend him?" he asked.

"No one. The courier will return with me."

Marie looked quickly up from the letter she pretended still to read.

"But, at night, dear Theodore," she cried, "surely you will never go without attendants?"

"My dear, there is not the least danger. I cannot wait till these fellows get ready; and the fewer there are of us, the less shall we be delayed at the stations, where we change horses. Knocking people up in the middle of the night, we shall be detained long enough any way. But I have my sword, you know, and I can take pistols, too, if you like.—Get them for me, Don-tard," to the valet, who was drawing on his boots.

Marie made an exclamation. While speaking to

her husband, she had purposely, though with well-acted carelessness, suffered the open letter to touch the flame of the wax candle, by whose light she had been reading. A corner had taken fire. She had affected not to perceive it till the flame scorched her fingers when, with a little scream, she dropped it on the table. Theodore and the servant both sprang forward to help her. Theodore caught the flaming sheet and threw it on the hearth, where a log of wood was burning. In a moment the tell-tale was wholly consumed. Marie naturally lamented the mark on her pretty inlaid table; and Theodore as naturally rallied her on her carelessness.

And now the horse was ready. The parting words must be said. O how difficult to say them with due calmness, under such circumstances! Marie went with her husband to the head of the grand staircase. A little agitation was excusable, as she had shown herself alarmed at the prospect of the night journey. As Theodore crossed the hall Bernard pressed forward.

“ You are not going alone, Monseigneur ?” he asked.

“ I must, good Bernard,” and he repeated his reasons; not sorry to have an opportunity of doing so, before so many witnesses.

“ At least suffer me to follow you early to-morrow, or even to-night,” the old man urged earnestly. He knew well what was going on, and feared he was to be left behind. It was a sore grief to his master and mistress to leave him. But they were entirely in the gipsy’s hands, and she had expressly stipulated, that no one should accompany them. Besides, his absence on the morrow when the soldiers came, would be as suspicious as his presence would be the reverse.

"Not you, my good old Bernard," the Count replied, perhaps with more sadness than was altogether prudent. "But one of the younger men had better follow me to Saintfont. See to it," he turned to the steward, "and send whoever will be quietest in a house of sickness."

So he was gone, and Marie must go back to her empty drawing-room, to realize all that had passed, to look forward with dread to all that was to come.

Certainly Theodore's part in this night's trial was the lightest. There was something to his temperament exhilarating, in riding forth into the darkness to meet unknown dangers, to take his part in new and unimagined scenes. But to sit still and inactive in the lonely room; to feel that her husband had left his home for ever; to weigh the probabilities of their meeting again soon, the possibility of their never meeting again at all; to recollect, that now her own and her children's safety depended upon her energy and prudence; to imagine her Eugène's present position, his desolation when he should hear of their departure, all that might be before him, and he alone without one relative or friend in the wide kingdom of France! Ah, can we not well understand the torrent of bitter feelings which must rush upon her soul, the strong crying and tears with which she would pour out her heart to the Lord of her salvation? She retired to bed at her usual hour to escape remark. But in bed she could not remain. The greater part of the night was spent on her knees, wrestling with the unbelief of her sinking heart, supplicating for the blessings she and hers so sorely stood in need of. And not suppling in vain. The Lord manifested Himself to her

in great love and tenderness. Very precious were the words He spoke to her weary heart ; and very sweet did she find it to lay herself down in His everlasting arms, to feel herself hid under the shadow of His wings. Her night was sleepless, but not comfortless, and she rose on the morrow calm and strong for all the day's trials and dangers.

In turning over her plans on this wakeful night, Marie had thought with apprehension of the possibility of a rainy day, but even in this small matter was shown the lovingkindness of Him who numbers the very hairs of His servants' heads. The first dawn showed a day as bright and fair as heart could wish ; a cloudless sky, glowing sunshine, soft, mild breezes, all summer's pleasantness without its excessive heat. Marie found little difficulty in suggesting to the little girls the request she wished them to make, and their plans were soon arranged. It would have been quite out of place, quite unusual to go without an attendant for the children. And recollecting the *ruse* of the previous evening, Marie resolved that Ninette should be that attendant, trusting to find a good excuse for sending her back.

She hoped Marguerite might not return until after they had set out. But this hope was disappointed. Marguerite came, and was voluble in her expression of disapprobation. Marie tried to reason, but to reason Marguerite would not listen. She was, in her own words, "in despair, overwhelmed with chagrin." A whole day and night she had been away from her "petites," and now not to be allowed to see their happiness ! She had always gone to their fêtes hitherto,—why was she to be excluded now ? Marie's only recourse was in a

dignified assertion of her own right of choice, a decided announcement that such was her will. This subdued and silenced Marguerite at once. But it pained Marie to take this tone with one who had served her so long and faithfully. She could not bear to part with her even in seeming anger; and after the carriage was at the door and all ready, she went to seek the good bonne, and say some kind and soothing words to her. She found her alone in the children's room, sitting on a low chair, rocking herself back and forward, and the large tears rolling down her withered cheeks. Marie laid her hand kindly on the old woman's shoulder.

"Dear Marguerite," she said, "you must not be vexed, or think I do not like to have you with me. I have many reasons for leaving you behind me to-day; one is for your own sake. It would be very painful to you." She stopped abruptly. She was going too far. Marguerite was the last person to be trusted with a secret. But Marguerite, with unusual quickness, finished the sentence for her.

"To go there again! Ah yes, Madame! I have thought of all that. I see how kind and good you are. The last time I was there, both our boys were with us. Our beautiful, gallant Eugène, and baby Theodore was in my arms. Ah! I could not bear, I could not bear it!" and her tears flowed forth afresh.

Marie felt as if she could not bear it either. She stooped down, kissed the old woman's forehead, and hastily left the room without speaking. All morning she had been striving to keep down thought and feeling by constant occupation and bustle; and now these few words had awakened a tide of recollections the most agitating, which had threatened to destroy all

the composure she had striven so hard to gain. Her mind was thrown into tumult and confusion. She hardly knew where she was, what she did or said, and could no longer feel sure that she should not betray herself by an unguarded look or word, by an uncalled for agitation. But in this also she trusted herself to Him who had proved so kind a Father to her. "Under the shadow of Thy wings, under the shadow of Thy wings," she kept constantly repeating to herself, and she felt like a blind man led by One both loving, wise, and strong, knowing himself surrounded by dangers he could neither see nor avoid, and yet wholly at peace, going forward under a guidance that could not fail.

They set out. It would have been an unspeakable comfort to have been allowed to lie back in the corner of the carriage, to shut her eyes to all that could agitate her, all that could awaken memory. But the little girls were in the highest glee, and could not keep quiet. There was a constant call for mamma to look at this, to admire that, or to remember the last time they had been there. And there was Ninette on the seat opposite her, to watch every look and tone. So Marie was forced to sit forward, to look around, to talk, and laugh in the proper place, while everything that met her eye sent a fresh pang of recollection and regret to her heart.

Although the summer-house looked so near the château, they took a full hour to go by the carriage road, as they had to take a long round to get to a bridge over the river. To Marie the hour seemed three. And it was with a feeling of relief almost amounting to joy that she saw the last long hill rise before them, and heard Hortense point out the first peep of the

summer-house to Aimée, who had almost forgotten it. Now Ninette must be dismissed. The children spoke of what flowers they might expect to find so late in the season. A sudden thought seemed to be suggested to their mother by the words. .

“Ah, how stupid I am!” she exclaimed. “I told Guillaume to begin that new flower-bed to-day, and forgot to send a counter-order when we resolved to come here. He will certainly make some blunder about it, when there is no one to direct him. Ninette, I think I shall send you back in the carriage to remind him that I wish the bed to be oval; and I wish you would watch him a little all day, while he is about it. Your eye is very good, but his is not. It must be a long oval. But above all things see that he does not make sharp points at the ends. One so often sees these long narrow beds ending in absurd little beaks like a bird’s. The ends must above all things have a pretty curve. Make him stake out the ground, and then pass a cord round the stakes so that you can judge. And do not suffer him to put in a spade till you are quite satisfied. I have great confidence in your taste.”

She spoke so rapidly and eagerly that Ninette was completely blinded. Flattered by the compliments to her taste, pleased at the prospect of a day’s flirtation with the handsome Guillaume, she gladly accepted the task intrusted to her. She was afraid, she said, that Madame might be fatigued attending to the little ladies. But she very readily yielded to Marie’s assurance that she should not, and that to have her new flower-bed spoiled would be far more annoying. Ninette should unpack the basket they had brought,

she said, and arrange their dinner on the summer-house table before she went away, and either she or Marguerite might come back with the carriage in the afternoon, and pack up the remnants of the feast.

The gipsy had said that the soldiers would arrive about eleven o'clock ; and Marie had so timed her own departure as to insure that Ninette should not return to the château until they had again left it. It was now nearly half-past eleven. And while the servants and children were busy unpacking and arranging the provisions, Marie walked forward to the top of the bank opposite the château. From this point she could see all that was going on there. At first everything was still and quiet. But even while she looked, she saw the glitter of arms through the trees, and presently an officer in full uniform, followed by three soldiers, rode up to the entrance. Again a momentary sickness of great fear. But again it was subdued. One glance up into the blue sky, as if seeking to see the throne of her loving, caring Father, one more whisper of the words, "Under the shadow of Thy wings, Lord," and she was calm. She waited a moment to feel sure of herself, and then called Ninette to her side.

"Can you see who these are?" she asked, pointing to the soldiers.

"Soldiers, Madame!" the girl exclaimed. And Marie felt, even more than she saw, the keen black eyes were fixed upon her.

"I thought so," she said calmly. "A travelling party come to seek quarters, I suppose."

This was a favourite mode of annoyance to Huguenots, and one from which Theodore had several times suffered on her account during the last twelvemonth.

"It is a singular time of day to come on such an errand," she added. "One would think they might as well have gone a little farther before night. However, it is of no consequence. I do not intend to disturb myself for them. The steward knows what to do, and he can send for me if it be necessary. Bring me my book, Ninette, and one of the chairs from the summer-house. I shall sit here so long as the sun will permit."

The position was in full sight of the château. She believed that she had been observed looking at the soldiers, and thought that to assume so unconcerned a posture immediately after the discovery, might be construed into a sign of innocence.

Nor was she mistaken. The officer's suspicions had been aroused on learning that both the lord and lady of the château were gone. But the account the servants gave was so straightforward and probable, and as told by Catholic spies was so deserving of credit, it seemed so unlikely that the Countess would choose Ninette to accompany her, were flight contemplated, that his doubts were greatly shaken. And when he saw Marie first stand looking at himself and his party, and then quietly seat herself to read in perfect unconcern, these doubts vanished altogether. He abandoned his half-formed plan of going to question her, searched the house without finding the least suspicious circumstance, and then with another long gaze at Marie's comfortably reclining figure, set out for Saintfont.

Marie's heart rose in gratitude to God for this, and she felt greatly strengthened for what was before her. Ninette came to report that all was arranged in the summer-house. Marie desired her to move the seat more into the shade, (it was placed quite out of sight

this time,) gave orders to the men-servants about the return of the carriage, repeated her minute directions about the flower-bed ; and they left her alone.

She immediately summoned the children to her side, and, as gently as she could, told them their present position and future prospects. They were bewildered and frightened. Aimée exclaimed passionately against the wicked men who drove them from their home, and wished herself a man that she might kill them all. Hortense, timid and gentle, did not speak, but she turned deadly pale, and trembling from head to foot, clung convulsively to her mother.

Marie tried to soothe and calm them. Aimée she reminded of the truth that no man could do anything against them unless God so pleased. And to Hortense she spoke of the love and care of her Father in heaven, and of His constant watchfulness over them all.

“And where are we to go now, mamma ?” they asked.

“To the gipsy’s camp first.”

Hortense shuddered, and hid her face on her mother’s shoulder. Marie put her arm tenderly round her.

“My darling,” she said, “do you not think the Lord will be with us in the gipsy’s camp as well as in the château ? You love the Lord Jesus, Hortense, who has loved you, and died for you ?”

“Ah, yes ! mamma,” raising her pale face, and looking up with an earnest devout expression.

“Then, dear Hortense, you will try to trust Him, to feel sure that He loves you and cares for you. It grieves Him when He sees the children He so tenderly loves afraid, as if He were not with them, or did not care for their safety. And He does not like that they should

murmur about the sorrows He sends upon them. My Hortense will be brave and patient, will she not?"

"Yes, mamma," was the faint whisper, and she dashed away her tears, and obeyed Marie's directions to sit down with Aimée, and eat some of the food they had so gaily spread out so short a time before.

Marie could not eat, but she pressed the children to do so. And she filled the large pockets, then worn, with cakes, dried fruit, and biscuits for their use.

When they had finished the meal, she knelt down with them and prayed for God's blessing and protection, for His Holy Spirit to make them trust Him wholly, and submit to His will, and then, without venturing another look, she turned her back upon her pleasant home, and fled away into the heart of the woods with a child in either hand.



CHAPTER IX.

THE GIPSY'S CAVE.

DEENA had given her full directions about the road she must take ; Marie had listened attentively, and had believed she understood them perfectly, but the wood was thick and tangled, the paths many and devious. Her thoughts were occupied cheering and encouraging the trembling little ones clinging to her. She took the left turn when it should have been the right—the right instead of the left—soon lost all the landmarks she had been told to look for, and found herself going blindly, desperately forward, now on a narrow footpath, and again making her way through the very thickest of the wood, without the least sign to direct her steps, or to inform her where she was.

On, on they went, tearing their dress and wounding themselves upon the tangled brushwood. Strength soon failed to all three—their limbs trembled with weariness, their sight grew confused and dim. Hortense bore up bravely, remembering Marie's words, that murmuring grieved her loving Father in heaven ; but poor little Aimée wept and lamented unceasingly, and her cries growing ever weaker and weaker, wrung the poor mother's heart, already so sorely wounded.

Still did she carry with her the consciousness of her

Father's presence and guidance—still half unconsciously did she repeat the words, “Under the shadow of Thy wings, O Lord, under the shadow of Thy wings;” and Hortense, catching the precious meaning, echoed them again and again, “Under the shadow of Thy wings, of *Thy* wings, O Lord.”

Thus they went on for three or four hours, often sitting down to rest, then rising and toiling on again, now turning to one hand and now to another, with only one distinct aim, that of keeping within the concealment of the woods. At last their strength was completely exhausted—they could go no farther; and to what end go farther, Marie asked herself, when she knew not but what each step took her farther from the quarry she wished to gain, nearer the château she wished to avoid. They had been for some time pursuing a path which led up a pretty steep hill, and now Marie saw before her a steadily increasing light through the trees. She resolved to press on to it, believing that it must be the limit of the wood in that direction.

She was not mistaken, and coming out from among the trees, she found herself on a level plateau at the summit of the hill. The other side was precipitous, and bare of trees, so that a wide expanse of country lay before her. She recognised several spots, but so ignorant was she of the geography of her husband's property, that the recognition was of little use. In those days it was not the fashion for high-born ladies to be much out of doors—the greater part of their life was spent in their drawing-room. Marie had always liked to saunter about her flower-garden and terraces with her husband and children, but she had seldom cared to go farther. For this reason she had been often pre-

vented from attending the conventicles in which she delighted. She could only go when they were held in places which happened to be well known to her. As she stood on the brow of the hill she recollect ed having observed it with its curious crown of trees ; but she had never thought of calculating its position relative to the château, and now when she tried to do so, she had no data to work from, while her exhaustion was so great that the effort to think continuously was painful, almost impossible. After one or two bewildering attempts, she gave it up, and determined to seek rest, as being at present the most necessary and the only available good.

She drew back a little among the trees, and sat down with her children on a fallen trunk. She gave the children some of the cakes she had brought, and they afforded them amusement, occupation, and refreshment—but refreshment for Marie there was none. Her head ached and throbbed most painfully, her eyeballs felt burning, her lips were parched, and so great was her fatigue, that even while she sat still, her knees shook with an incessant distressing tremor, and now for the first time she lost the quiet resting spirit which had hitherto sustained her. She tried to repeat her favourite words, but her mind was too thoroughly exhausted to be able to realize their meaning or feel their force. She was sensible of no great grief or fear, only a dull dead weight of apprehension, which was more trying than more acute sorrow could have been.

She had sat thus for a long time—the children had discussed their biscuits, and, leaning against her, had nearly fallen asleep, when they were all startled by a noise behind them. Nearer and nearer it came—it

was certainly a man's footstep. "We are discovered," thought Marie. "Lord, Thy will be done!" and clasping her children tighter in her arms, she meekly bowed her head, and waited to feel the dreaded grasp on her shoulder.

An exclamation from Hortense made her look round, and Bernard was before her. She started up with an exclamation of joy—hope and energy returned.

"Where did you come from, Bernard?" she cried; "how did you find us?"

He would have explained, but he was closely followed by Zeena, who interposed.

"No talking, no delay," she said authoritatively; "if you value your lives, follow me at once without a word;" and she turned and strode down the hill by the path up which Marie had so painfully toiled.

"I cannot go farther," pouted little Aimée, "I am so tired."

"In my arms you can, little one," said Bernard's cheery voice, as he raised her and placed her on one arm, while he held out the other hand to Hortense. He stood back to allow Marie to pass, and they set out.

A little way down the hill the gipsy stood waiting for them.

"We must make our way through here," pointing into the wood.—"Take care," to Bernard, "that the same thing does not happen again. Lady, wrap yourself in my cloak," giving it to her.

Bernard set down Aimée for a moment, and taking off his upper coat, wrapped it round Hortense, explaining to Marie that he and the gipsy had easily traced her by the fragments of dress left on the bushes. He took up Aimée again; the gipsy turned into the wood,

and went on at a pace nearly as rapid as if no impediment stood in her way, dashing aside the branches, crashing through the underwood, and trampling down the long tangled grass as if she trode on a smooth level lawn. To Marie and Hortense this passage was terribly fatiguing—Bernard gave them what assistance he could, but with Aimée in his arms that was not much.

Poor patient Hortense toiled on without complaint, but he felt her staggering painfully ; and at last as they came out on a narrow footpath, she fell against him. He looked down into her pale face and saw that she was nearly fainting from mere fatigue. All Marie's own weariedness was forgotten in anxiety for her child.

“ I can carry her,” she said.

“ No, Madame, you cannot, indeed you cannot—try to lift her into my arms.”

But at that moment Zeena returned, impatient at their delay. Comprehending at a glance the state of matters, she caught up Hortense, and saying, “ Bernard, you know the way,” was out of sight in an instant.

“ We are near the place now, dear Madame,” said Bernard cheerily ; “ you know this road, do you not ?”

Marie looked round, and recognised the path by which she had gone to the quarry the first time she had seen Zeena. Renewed hope carried her a little farther, then her steps began again to falter. Bernard made her lean upon him—a little farther, and he was forced to put his arm round her—a little farther, and strength failed altogether.

“ Thank God, there is the gipsy !” he cried, as he looked anxiously up the path, “ no, it is my master !” and in a moment Theodore was at Marie's side.

He took her in his arms. She was too completely exhausted to feel even surprise. There was only a delightful sense of relief to both body and mind as she lay in his arms with her own clasped round his neck. A few paces brought them to the quarry. They passed round a projecting corner to a low arch in the rock. Marie had closed her eyes, and was only dreamily conscious of what happened. Some one said, "Give her to me, Count, you cannot come in here with her in your arms." She was transferred to other hands, carried along a narrow, winding, and in some places very low-roofed passage, into a wide room, where she was placed on a bench cut out of the rock. Her husband was close behind her. He sat down by her side, and taking her again in his arms, laying her head on his breast, seemed unable to express the joy of his heart.

Marie roused herself to return his caresses, and to look around. She was in a large irregularly-shaped cave, whose roof was so lofty her eye could not catch it in the dim light. A fire burned on the ground, and near it on a sheep-skin lay her own Hortense fast asleep. Bernard was just coming out of the narrow passage by which they had entered. Zeena was going busily back and forward between a dark corner of the cave and a pot which hung over the fire. Her husband, who had brought Marie in, and had gone back to close and conceal the entrance, returned and threw himself on the ground beside the fire, looking gloomy and anxious. It was all like a dream, except the close pressure of Theodore's arms round her, his warm kisses on her forehead.

She could have been content to lie thus upon her husband's breast, without moving or speaking. But

Theodore was anxious to hear all that had happened to her since they parted, and in answering his questions her own curiosity was aroused. Memory returned, and with it surprise—surprise to see him there, and to see him in his strange gipsy garb.

"You did not go to Saintfont, then?" she said.

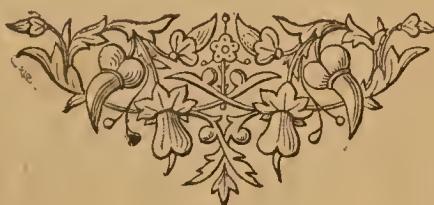
"No; it was never intended I should. Our good friends had planned otherwise, and wisely planned. My courier led me only a little beyond our own gates to where his brother awaited us. With him I changed dress. He mounted my horse, and rode off to Saintfont. I came here. Here I have been all last night and to-day. The pretended Count, and pretended courier, have meanwhile, as we hope, been acting as lures to draw the soldiers the whole way to Saintfont, and leave the coast clear for our escape. A little after mid-day we heard from a scout that the party were fairly off, and we only waited your arrival to set out. But hours passed, and you did not come. I was imprisoned here alone, restless, and miserably anxious. Zeena went backwards and forwards watching for you. Dibon was at the hamlet making arrangements——" he stopped abruptly, gulped down his words, and, with an involuntary glance at his sleeping children, went on hurriedly,—“At last Bernard came. He had gone to the summer-house so soon as the soldiers left the château, and, not finding you there, came on here. Zeena returned with him to the summer-house, and traced you from thence, I know not how.”

Zeena now approached, bearing a large old-fashioned flagon, filled with some steaming liquid.

“Lady,” she said, “you must rest, not speak. Already your eye is brighter than when you came in.

If you suffer the first drowsiness to pass, fever will come on, you will be unable to sleep, and sleep you must have. Drink this. It will both soothe and revive you."

Marie took it gladly, for her mouth and throat were parched with thirst. It was a decoction of bitter herbs, not very pleasant to the taste. But she found, as the gipsy had said, that it both invigorated her weary body, and soothed her irritated nerves. When she had drunk it, Zeena led her to where a bed had been prepared for her, of dried moss, grass, and leaves, covered with sheepskins. It felt deliciously soft to poor Marie's aching limbs. Theodore sat down beside her, and in a few minutes she was asleep.



CHAPTER X.

THE PARTING.

SHE slept long and heavily. When she awoke, her husband was no longer by her side. She raised herself and looked round, but could not see him. The children still lay sleeping near the fire. Bernard sat beside them, his head leaning upon his hand, apparently in deep thought. Zeena's figure was now visible in the light, now lost in the darkness, as she stept busily to and fro about her own occupations. But no Theodore, no Dibon, were to be seen. A little alarmed, she called her husband by name. Bernard started, rose instantly, and came to her.

"Where is your master?" she asked in a low, agitated voice.

Bernard hesitated. He seemed unwilling to speak.

"Speak, Bernard. Oh, tell me the worst!" she cried, starting up. "He is not—Is he?—Has he been taken prisoner?"

"No, no, Madame; it is only—" again he stopped, and looked around as if for help to say what must be said. Such a help was Zeena, who now came to them.

"Lady," she said, with unusual gentleness, "it grieved Zeena much to part you from him on whom your heart rests."

"To part us! Oh, surely not, Zeena. Oh, surely

we might travel together!" she exclaimed, in great distress.

"Lady, it could not be. For his sake, for all our sakes, it could not be," the gipsy answered compassionately.

Marie made no remonstrance. But she bowed her head upon her knees with an expression of deep, yet submissive grief, most touching to see. The gipsy seemed much moved.

"Lady," she said with great earnestness, "oh, believe Zeena, this should never have been, could Zeena have helped it."

"I do believe you, good kind friend—I should be most ungrateful if I did not," Marie answered, looking up and trying to speak calmly.

Zeena explained the reasons which had governed their plans. At that time the lately-passed laws against emigration were in all the vigour of novelty. The search for emigrants was very strict. One or two well-known instances had lately occurred of escapes effected under the disguise of just such a travelling party as their own. They must lay their account with being stopped and examined—they must be very careful not to awaken suspicion. Zeena's party, when she had passed through the town of —— two days before, had consisted of herself, her sick boy, and Michaut. It was necessary to limit the party who should leave that neighbourhood to the same number. Dibon had spoken openly to his friends in the hamlet of his intention of going in another direction with his other boy. In such times, the least change of plan might awaken suspicion. Then in the event of an encounter with the gendarmes, the presence of the husband might agitate the wife, or that of

the wife the husband. There was a better chance of composure and presence of mind where the safety of each was alone concerned.

"But my children," Marie exclaimed, as the full import of this explanation flashed on her mind—"my children—they must go with me."

Zeena did not answer; it was hard for one mother to inflict such a wound on another mother's heart. Marie threw herself on her knees before her, and clasped her hands in agonized supplication.

"Zeena, Zeena!" she cried, "you cannot, you do not mean to take my children from me—you yourself are a mother. Oh, say you cannot be so cruel!"

Zeena turned away—Bernard spoke for her.

"Dear Madame, one can go with you, but not both. One can be hid in the cart beside the lame boy; but for their sakes as well as for your own, you must part with one."

"Bernard, Bernard, how can I?" she cried, hardly able to speak the words—"How can I leave either behind?—I cannot. Oh, you must feel I cannot."

"Not leave her behind, dear Madame?" he said eagerly; "why, we shall be in Holland before you."

"We!" she repeated; "do you go, Bernard?"

"Ah, Madame, you surely did not think I could stay behind. Give one of the little ones to me, and I shall answer for her safety with my life," and seeing her more calm, he gently raised her from the ground and seated her on the bed. He then detailed their plans.

In her first eagerness to assist Marie's escape, the gipsy had forgotten about the children; and when she did remember, she was at a great loss what to do with them. Dibon had said peremptorily that they could

not go; but Zeena could not so easily resolve, as she said, to break the mother's heart. One she could provide for, and it was making arrangements for the other that had detained Dibon most of the day at the village. Knowing the circumstances of every family in the neighbourhood, he had early learned that Pierre Lajou and his family were intending to emigrate. To them he went, awoke their fears by telling them of the visit of the soldiers to the château, convinced them they should set out at once, and easily persuaded them to take charge of one of the little girls. Bernard's resolution to accompany her made the plan all the more advantageous. In truth, Pierre's journey was likely to be far less hazardous than that of the Count and Countess. In his humble rank lay one security, and he proposed to find his way straight to the Swiss frontier, while it was for many reasons thought best that the Blancards should traverse the greater part of France, and sail from Rouen either for England or Holland, as circumstances might serve.

Bernard and the gipsy vied with each other in detailing and dwelling upon all these advantages, in order to reconcile Marie to parting with her child. But no argument reached her heart, or comforted her, as did the one she kept constantly repeating to herself, "It is Thy will, O Lord, and Thou lovest me." While they reasoned, she prayed—prayed earnestly for submission to her heavenly Father's will, and for His protection for her child.

Hortense turned in her sleep, and awoke herself. She sat up a little, and looked round bewildered. Marie went to her. The child gave a low cry of joy, threw her arms round her mother's neck, and clung to her

frightened, trembling. Ah, how did the clasp of those little arms go to Marie's heart! What might her child be called to suffer when she should have no mother to cling to? She raised her gently so as not to awaken Aimée, carried her to the bench, and sat down with her in her lap. Hortense seemed afraid to look round, keeping her face hid on her mother's shoulder, and trembling violently.

"Why does my darling tremble so?" Marie said, bending tenderly over her; "of what are you afraid, my dear Hortense?"

"It is so dark, mamma, so strange."

"And has my Hortense forgotten that God is with us in this dark strange place?"

"Ah, I remember now,—I am not afraid now," and she sat up and looked round. "Mamma, as we came here when I was weary, oh, so weary, I remembered the verse you once taught me, 'Even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me,' and I thought that God was holding me that I should not fall; I cannot be afraid while God is with me."

"And even if God were to take you away from me, my Hortense—" her voice was so agitated that the child took alarm and interrupted her.

"You are not going to leave me, mamma? O no, you cannot leave me."

"Not for all the world would I do it, if I could help it, dearest; but it would be dangerous for you, for me, for us all, that we should go together. Hortense, darling, do not cry so, do not tremble so. Ah, Hortense, you will break my heart—I cannot bear it."

The little girl tried to check her sobs and tears, when she saw how greatly they distressed her mother.

"But to leave me with that dark woman, oh, mamma!" and she shuddered violently.

"No, dear, no! You are to go with Bernard, and it is only for the journey. Soon, very soon, if it please God, we shall all meet in Holland, where we shall be safe—where no wicked men can torment us."

This was at least better than she had feared; and while Marie went on to describe the joy of their meeting, the delight of grandmamma and Aunt Pauline—when they should see Hortense, and should hear that mamma, papa, and Aimée were following her, she listened quietly, seemed a little comforted, and even began once or twice to smile. But the thought of parting with her mother came back, again the lip quivered, and with a fresh burst of tears she sobbed out, "But to go without you, mamma, oh! it is *so hard*."

Marie's heart echoed the "*so hard*." She felt in great doubt about the propriety of sending such a timid, sensitive child from her. Might not the bold, high-spirited Aimée miss her less? but then Aimée was so young, so thoughtless; she required all a mother's care and watchfulness. She had less sense, and although she spoke so prettily about God's care, and really felt what she said, she had less steady religious principle than her elder sister. It was to Hortense's principle Marie now appealed.

"It is God who has ordered our way, dear Hortense," she whispered, bending down and resting her head on the child's cheek, "shall we say that anything is too hard that He sends? Ah, Hortense, Jesus Christ did not think it too hard to die on the cross for us. If He so loved us, do you think He will send us one little sorrow more than is necessary?"

"No, mamma," she answered instantly, "I will not say it is hard again; I will go when you please, and Jesus Christ will comfort me when I have not you—when I cannot tell you everything, I can tell Him, and He will feel sorry for me when I am sorry, and glad when I am glad. I will go away, mamma, whenever you like, and Jesus Christ will go with me. I shall not be afraid, I am sure I shall not. When must I go?"

Marie applied to Bernard for an answer to this question. "As soon as possible," he said; "Lajou only waited for them, the sooner they set out the better. They should be the farther off before the soldiers returned from Saintfont. Madame's flight must be known at the château before this, and any delay only increased their danger."

Zeena had taken her goblet from the fire, and had emptied its contents into a large wooden platter, and she now invited them to partake of a strange-looking, but by no means unpalatable stew of meat and vegetables, thickened with coarse bread.

The meal was sad and silent. So soon as it was concluded, Marie made a sign to Bernard to take Hortense away. She wished to shorten the parting scene for all their sakes. Hortense sprang into her mother's arms. She did not speak—she shed no tear, but she covered her mother's face, neck, and hands with passionate kisses.

"God bless my darling, and take care of her!" prayed Marie fervently.

"And Eugène too, mamma! poor Eugène is all alone."

Marie's heart leaped wildly at the words; the agony

they gave her was almost more than she could bear. She paused for an instant to quiet herself with the thought, "It is Thy will, O Lord, and Thou lovest us," and then said in a low but calm voice, "God bless my Eugène, and make him feel that the Lord himself is with him."

She gave Hortense the last, long kiss, and placed her in Bernard's arms. She had not thought of bringing any warm clothing with her. And, indeed, she could not well have done so, if she had thought of it. The gipsy brought out a curious nondescript garment of dark cloth, something between a cloak and a blanket, and wrapped the child in it.

"Now, Bernard," she said quietly, "laying her head on his shoulder, that she might not see her mother's face again, "now, Bernard, I am ready."

And they went forth. Marie felt strangely calm. She realized God's presence and care of her, as she had never done before, much as she had often enjoyed of that realization. Even of Eugène she could think calmly, and could feel that God's love for him was far more tender than her own, and that she could leave him in His hands with perfect confidence. God's people in those days possessed a wondrous power of realizing the great truths of their religion. Brought up amid dangers and difficulties, in which their own wisdom was as folly, their own strength as weakness, they learned to rest on God with a steady childlike faith of which we know too little. One could hardly call it faith. It was more like sight. They really seemed to hear God's voice, to feel His arm around them, to see His eye of love watching over them. As Marie sat for a few minutes after Hortense was gone, lifting up her heart to God,

and pouring out its every thought and feeling to Him, her whole soul swelled with rapture, as she felt that He heard every faint whisper, that her own lot, and the lot of all she loved, was in His power, and that His everlasting arms were around them all. She felt herself resting upon her Saviour's bosom, and she felt, in her inmost soul, the love and tenderness with which He regarded her.



CHAPTER XI.

THE NIGHT JOURNEY.



LL this time Aimée was fast asleep. They had been careful not to arouse her, lest her grief at the parting might increase that of her mother and sister. But now it was necessary to awaken her, and get ready for their journey. She was a fearless, independent little thing, and shewed much less alarm at finding herself in a strange place than Hortense had done. And although she did shed a few tears on learning that her sister was not to go with them, the novelty of her situation soon distracted her thoughts, and amused her.

While she ate her supper, Marie exchanged her dress for one of Michaut's, which Zeena had provided for her. The gipsy stained her face and arms, and even her feet and ankles ; for, of course, Michaut wore no stockings. He, indeed, went barefoot. But as an exact imitation in this respect must have impaired Marie's walking powers, Zeena had provided a pair of sandals which protected her feet from the hard rough roads, and at the same time gave her muscles more freedom than her own shoes could have done. Her long hair was cut, and a bright scarlet handkerchief bound round her head, much to Aimée's admiration, who declared that mamma was “un très joli garçon.” Some of her

clothes Zeena tore into fragments, and burned in the fire, along with her hair. Others, which would have taken too long to burn, she buried in the rough ground outside. It was, at least, possible, she said, that the entrance to the cave might be discovered, and, in that case, it might be dangerous that any trace of its late guests should be visible. When all was ready, Aimée was wrapt in the gipsy's cloak, and bound upon her back. Zeena dispersed the few remaining embers of the fire, and they set out. Zeena went first through the dark passage, making Marie hold by her dress. When they got out, she replaced carefully the brushwood, leaves, and turf which filled the mouth of the entrance, rolled a large stone before it, piling upon it a fresh supply of withered branches; and then, satisfied that all was well concealed, led the way into the dark and silent wood.

The first part of the journey was the most dangerous, both on account of Aimée's being with them, and because the servants from the château might be expected to be abroad seeking their mistress. Anxious to shorten, as much as possible, the long ten miles' walk, Zeena took a short cut through the fields, which led them across the high-road, near the very gate of the château. Marie, in the dark, knew not where she was, and went quietly on after the gipsy, until just as they were drawing near the high-road, she saw her guide pause suddenly and listen. Marie's heart beat so loudly, she could at first hear nothing else; but after a few seconds the sound of a horse's feet were audible in the distance, and looking more carefully round, she could distinguish, a few paces before them, the roof of her own porter's lodge. The sound came nearer. It was a horse coming down the avenue.

The gipsy listened attentively, then throwing back her head with an air of relief, she whispered, "It is an inexperienced rider. He will keep the high-road, that is very certain," and drawing Marie behind a high bush, she quietly awaited his approach. They heard the porter come out to open the gates. They were so near, they heard every word that was said.

"Where are you going, Mâitre Simon, at this time of night?"

"Do you not know, that our lady has escaped with the children?" answered a pompous voice, which Marie recognised as belonging to the steward.

"Ah yes! the coachman stopped, as he passed back with the empty coach, and told us he had gone for the lady to the summer-house, and she was not there."

"And the fool waited nearly two hours, thinking she had only gone a little way into the wood, and would come back when she wished to return home. So it was dark before we heard anything of it. I sent to tell the reverend superior at Lamont. All the monks were engaged at a religious ceremony, and he only came to us a few minutes ago, and has sent us all riding over the country to carry the alarm. I am not used to riding, and this horse starts so at everything in the dark. So, so, then, good fellow, fine horse—quiet now, be quiet, good fellow. Do just lead him through the gate, will you?"

"And where do you go?" the other asked, as he obeyed his request. But the worthy steward was too deeply engrossed with his horse to heed the question. There was a sound of shuffling and snorting on the one side, and vigorous patting and good-fellowing on the other; and then horse and man set off at a brisk

pace along the high-road, and were soon out of hearing.

"It might have been as well if we had heard where he was going," muttered the gipsy. "However, it matters little. We can surely get the better of a fool like him. Come, lady, the porter is so busy telling his wife the news, we shall be able to cross the high-road unnoticed."

They did so, and plunged again into the shade of thick woods. On they went through the dark night. Marie could not see half-a-dozen yards before her, and never knew where she was. But she felt a strange pleasure in thus going on in the darkness, feeling that the Lord Himself was leading her, and that her every step was known to Him, was taken under His care and guidance. To realize that strange and unknown dangers might be close to her on every side, and yet to know that His arm shielded her, and to feel perfect satisfaction in the thought that the Lord God omnipotent did reign,—this was to Marie a source of the sweetest, most restful peace.

It was early morning before they reached their destination, and the moon was sending forth her soft light to guide them on their way. Marie's limbs ached with the unwonted exercise, but still she held on courageously and steadily. The gipsy had just told her, that they were very near rest now, when she stopped suddenly, and listened. Marie had only heard a low chirping as of young birds, whose mother was returning to her nest. But Zeena knew better than Marie, that there were no young birds in nests at that time of year. And she awaited a repetition of the sound. It came from some trees in front of them. The gipsy

bade Marie stand still, and went forward to the trees. Marie heard the faintest possible whisper, and the gipsy returned to her side.

"Here, lady," she said, in a very low voice, "we must turn aside through the wood. Take care to make no noise, not to break the branches, to leave no trace of our passage."

They went a little way slowly and cautiously, then the gipsy again left Marie in a very thick, dark part of the wood, telling her to stand quite still, and promising to return in less than five minutes. It might be only five minutes, but it seemed much longer to Marie, standing there alone, and still ignorant, as she was, what danger threatened. Still, as she leant her weary body against a tree, her heart rose in gratitude, and even in joy, to the Lord, who was so graciously making her soul to rest quietly in His care.

When Zeena returned, she took Marie's hand, and led her through the remaining part of the wood, out upon a narrow piece of green sward, lying bright in the moonshine. Then Marie saw that they stood above the high precipitous bank of a river, and that Zeena no longer carried Aimée.

"She is quite safe. I take you to her," was the gipsy's answer to Marie's eager question about her child. "That boy came to warn us, that soldiers are now searching our camp. You must remain in concealment until they are gone," and she led her forward to the edge of the precipice, and a little way along to where a fringe of trees bent down towards the river, completely shutting out all sight of it, or of its bank. Zeena went down on her knees, beside the trunk of one of these overhanging trees, and parting aside the

branches, showed Marie a curious ladder made of strong pieces of bark, hanging down the face of the cliff to a level platform about twenty feet below.

"Can you go down that?" she asked.

For a moment Marie shrank back, but quickly gathering courage, she answered, she could do whatever was necessary. The gipsy went down first, and directing Marie to keep her face to the rock, she guided her feet from step to step, so that the bottom was easily and safely reached.

By the moonlight Marie could see where she was. At one time a bold promontory had here stood out into the river; but, either by the gradual operation of natural causes, or by some sudden convulsion, a great part of it had years ago sunk down from the rest of the bank, and now stood firm, as I have said, nearly twenty feet below it. It had all been covered with trees and bushes, but a small space about three or four feet square had been cleared, and at one side of this clearing, wrapt in the gipsy's cloak, lay little Aimée fast asleep. The overhanging trees and bank precluded the possibility of discovery from above, and from observers on the other bank they were equally hidden by the brushwood and trees which had been left standing on the terrace itself.

Zeena made Marie sit down in a corner, well sheltered from the keen blast of the early morning, placed Aimée on her knee, drew the cloak carefully, even tenderly round them both, and left them, saying—

"I must go to the camp, but I shall come back so soon as the soldiers are gone. And keep up your heart, gentle one. It is very well for us that they have made this visit. We shall be the more free from them in the future."

It was a quiet peaceful spot in which Marie sat, the river murmuring below, the wind sighing softly through the trees overhead, and the level beams of the moon low in the sky, cast long lines of light and shade on the green turf at her feet. But not more quiet and peaceful was the scene than her own heart. All the happiness of her life passed before her mind as a pleasant dream, awakening no regret, only gratitude for the past, trust for the future. The home of her childhood in all its wild, romantic beauty, her husband's home in its fertility and pleasantness, rose before her eyes, and she lived over again, even to the minutest details, many scenes of earlier and later life, more particularly those of the last twenty-four hours, tracing God's hand in every event, returning Him thanks for every token of His goodness, and rejoicing with child-like faith to take every gift as from His hands. Her mind dwelt much upon her husband, and recalled all the changes through which he had passed during the last few weeks; the dull, pertinacious despondency, the acute remorse, succeeded by the animation, the excitement, even the exultation of the past night and day. She prayed earnestly for him and for her absent children, earnestly but not anxiously. Anxiety was for the time swallowed up in quiet confidence in the protection and blessing of her heavenly Father, whose wisdom and power are equalled only by His love. Bodily fatigue might have something to do with this great quietness of spirit; but far more was due to the tender ministering care of Him who "stayeth His rough wind in the day of the east wind," who "watereth His vineyard every moment," and who suiteth His supply of grace to every moment's need. Of this Marie

was deeply conscious; and ever as the quiet peace of her soul increased, increased, too, was her gratitude to Him who had ordered all things for her, all things in her outward life, all in her inner spirit.

Zeena returned after about an hour's absence, and found Aimée still asleep—Marie sitting in the place and posture in which she had left her, looking up calmly into the blue sky at the stars beginning to pale before the morning light. The gipsy resumed her burden, and while holding the sleeping child on one arm, assisted Marie up the ladder with the other. Marie recognised her Father's tender care in this rude woman's gentleness, and thought even for weaknesses and fears with which she could have little sympathy. The bark ladder was drawn up and concealed among the bushes, and they were soon at the gipsy's encampment.

This time there was no attempt at concealment. The small black tents were pitched on the sheltered side of a narrow strip of plantation, bordering a piece of waste land, through which ran the high-road, and a bright fire blazed in front, attracting the attention of every passer-by. The party encamped here was numerous; but they all welcomed Marie with kindness. One of the little tents had been set apart for her, and into it she crept with the half-awakened Aimée, seeing with intense satisfaction that Zeena had laid herself down to sleep across the entrance.

Fatigued as Marie was, sleep did not come so readily as it had done in the cave on the previous afternoon. It was now the gipsies' time for being awake, and the loud voices and laughter of the elder members of the party, with the shouts and occasional squabbles of the children disturbed her, so unused to any such annoy-

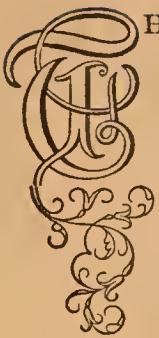
ance. When she did fall asleep, however, she slept quietly for several hours, and awoke much refreshed. Aimée was gone from her side, and when she went out to seek her, she found her transformed into a gipsy child, and most contentedly chatting to the lame boy, Robin, who was to be her companion in the journey.

Some of the gipsies had gone on, others were preparing to follow, and so soon as Marie had finished the rude breakfast prepared for her, they all set out, Aimée in the covered cart beside Robin, who was charged to keep her amused and quiet, and as much as possible out of sight.



CHAPTER XII.

DANGERS BY THE WAY.

HEY met no adventures this day. They went only about ten miles, and Marie, Aimée, Robin, and Zeena, slept the following night in a comfortable barn among clean straw. Zeena had begged this night's quarters from a worthy farmer, ostensibly for the sake of her sick boy, really from a consideration for Marie and Aimée; and the good man having a large, dearly-loved family himself, granted leave cordially, his kind-hearted wife sending them a liberal supply of food from her own table.

Ten or twelve miles the next day, and so on for the next three weeks. Such leisurely journeys suited the gypsies' tastes and habits; but Marie felt often fretted and impatient when she remembered the long weary way before her, although, had she been permitted to press on more rapidly, her strength must have failed long before reaching her destination. As it was, though excitement and anxiety kept her up, and Zeena made her ride in one of the carts, or on a donkey, whenever she could do so without attracting attention, yet each night she felt so exhausted, that she often feared the morning's sun would find her unable to proceed.

Sometimes they travelled in company with other

gipsies, but oftener alone. And this Marie liked best, although it was more dangerous, a small gipsy party being unusual enough to excite suspicion, and where it was excited, there being too few to make it easy to draw attention from the really suspicious individuals. But in the larger companies, though she was always treated with kindness, and even respect, there was much that she could not but shrink from with loathing, and which she was deeply pained that her child should see and hear. And it was always with pleasure that she saw her companions depart, and leave her alone with the kind Zeena and Robin.

Scarcely a day passed in which they did not get an alarm, more or less severe, either from parties of soldiers scouring the country in search of fugitives, or from patrols of the peasant guard stationed all along the roads to arrest, and turn back suspicious characters. Great was the skill Zeena showed in avoiding these parties, where such avoidance was possible; and where it was not, still more admirable were her coolness and presence of mind in meeting them, evading their questions, and dispelling their suspicions. Once or twice they had reason to fear that in this last matter they had not wholly succeeded. But in each instance the suspecter was one of the peasant guard, and these men cordially abhorring the work forced upon them, and for the most part sympathizing more with the pursued than the pursuers, were by no means vigilant in the discharge of their duty, but had been known to assist fugitives, even at the hazard of their own lives.*

It was, however, one of these very men who brought them into the most serious difficulty they had yet met

* See Weiss's History of the Protestant Refugees.

with. He was a surly, ill-tempered fellow, with a naturally tyrannical disposition, delighting to exercise the brief authority with which he was invested. From this cause, more than from any real suspicion, he arrested their march, and insisted that they should accompany him to the neighbouring village, to be examined by the magistrate. This must have been highly dangerous, and Zeena resolutely refused. She was a woman of extraordinary strength ; even alone she was more than a match for the fellow, and with Marie, who looked like a well-grown boy, was more formidable than he cared to encounter. He left them with a threat to follow them with a party of gendarmes. Zeena had no doubt he would keep his purpose, and made her preparations accordingly. For herself and Robin there was no risk, but Marie and the child must, she said, be hid somehow. The district through which they were passing was well known to her ; she had often travelled through it, and had spent several winters there. She knew nearly every one of the inhabitants ; and the farmer who lived at the farm on which they then were, was her particular friend. Dibon had once rendered this man an essential service, by revealing to him a plot for waylaying and robbing him on his return home from a fair, and the farmer had repaid the service by repeated acts of kindness to himself and family. Zeena knew the worthy man and his wife thoroughly, knew that though Catholic by profession, they were more than half Huguenot in heart, and had assisted many a poor persecuted family to escape ; knew also that they were entirely worthy of full confidence, and to them, therefore, she applied, telling them the exact truth. Her hopes of their pity

and sympathy were not disappointed; but assistance seemed a more difficult matter.

"We have as good a *cachette* as there is in France," said Matthieu, "and many a poor persecuted has it hid in its day. But he whom you name," (Zeena had recognised the patrol,) "knows the secret. He is a renegade Huguenot, and was hid in that very place for more than one day and night. There is another place, but"—and he stopped, and looked compassionately at Marie.

"Oh, do not mind what place it is," she cried eagerly, "if it will only conceal us."

"Ah, lady," he answered, shaking his head, "you could not stay in it. You do not know what a place it is. I could not bear to see such as you in such a dreary horrible hole."

"You would then rather see her at the stake?" said Zeena impatiently.

This question decided the matter. He explained that in the well at the bottom of his garden was a small lateral chamber made for the express purpose of concealing such fugitives. Marie at once declared her readiness to take refuge in it, and when the good mother of the house had wrapt her and Aimée in as many warm cloaks and coverlets as they could bear, they were led down the garden to the well. Zeena could not stay to see them safe. She, with Robin and his cart, set off at once, that they might be seen by the soldiers pursuing their way with perfect unconcern.

The farmer and his wife lowered Marie and Aimée in the bucket. The men of the farm were all absent at work. And it was well they were so; for, as Matthieu said, the best way to keep a secret is not to

know it. Marie carried down a little billet of burning wood in her hand to shew her the entrance to her den, throwing it into the water when it had served its purpose. A den it was, indeed, more dreary and miserable than she had fancied. It was so far down as to be perfectly dark, about six feet high, three or four wide, and twelve or fourteen long. The water stood more than two inches deep on the floor, and the walls were dripping with moisture—with something almost worse than moisture Marie thought, when a large toad dropped on Aimée's head, and crawled down her neck and arms. The child screamed, and struggled to get away from her mother, declaring she could not stay in such a horrible place; but Marie took her in her arms, wrapt her up in her own coverings, so that neither water nor toad could reach her, and soothed and encouraged her.

"We must stay, darling, for a little. I am not afraid. God is with us, and will take care of us."

"But if the men come down here, and find us after all?" sobbed poor Aimée.

"The Lord will hide us under the shadow of His wings," she answered confidently.

Aimée raised her head, and ceased her sobbing.

"Ah, mamma," she said, "that was what you and Hortense said the day we were lost in the wood."

"Yes, dear, and the Lord did hide us that day, when we knew not but that every step might bring us on our enemies. And the Lord sent Bernard and good Zeena to guide us right. And He has taken care of us all ever since." And she went on to recall the many proofs of His care and goodness they had experienced during the last fortnight, until her words were stopped by the

sound of horses' feet passing along the road near which the well was situated.

It was the soldiers. The good farmer and his wife had hardly had time to compose their spirits and countenances before they arrived. Matthieu was asked if the gipsy and her party had been at his house.

"Yes," he said, "I gave them meat and drink, for I know them; good worthy people they are."

"Good worthy people, and gipsies!" sneered the patrol, who had accompanied the party.

"Yes, good and worthy, and gipsies. Better and more worthy than some folks I know who are not gipsies," the old man retorted angrily, glancing significantly at the other. His anger being roused did him good; it made him more composed. He pointed out to the officer in command the gipsy and her cart at some distance along the road.

"The young lad is not there, though," cried the informer.

"There was no young lad when she came here," Matthieu said very coolly.

The officer said he must search the house. The farmer readily acquiesced. Every room was looked into; and at last, with a look of malicious triumph, the patrol led the way to the secret chamber. It was empty. Matthieu laughed derisively.

"You are satisfied now, I hope?" he asked.

"No, I am not," the other answered furiously; "you have a well, I know, good master Matthieu."

The wife, listening at the foot of the stairs, heard the words, and sank down sick and giddy on the lowest step. The poor lady was lost now.

"A well? To be sure I have, what of that?" He

tried to speak contemptuously, in spite of the sore sinking at his heart.

"A well, what of that?" repeated the officer.

"I will tell you, Capitaine. These cursed Huguenots build secret chambers in their wells. Such a one this man has, I'll be bound. He is well known as a helper of heretics."

"Ay, none know it better than you," Matthieu muttered bitterly.

The officer was intensely disgusted with the whole affair. He hoped little, and cared less, for success; but that he might not be accused of want of zeal, he ordered the farmer to lead the way to the well. Matthieu's wife rose, and hid herself and her tremors in the kitchen closet. The men passed down to the garden.

"It is deep enough, at any rate. I can hardly see the water," the officer said, looking down. "Well, sirrah, as you know all about it, you must go seek this mysterious chamber."

The man did not like the task, the well looked so dark and deep. But he dared not refuse, and got into the bucket. The farmer officially offered his services to let him down. He understood the windlass, he said. So he did. Understood it well enough to make the bucket scrape against the damp wall, and give its occupant his share of the discomfort poor Marie was enduring. He was soon wet through, and thoroughly chilled.

"Mamma, mamma, they come," whispered Aimée.

"Hush, hush, darling, the Lord will hide us under the shadow of His wings. None can see us, unless He thinks it for our good that we should be seen;"

and she drew farther into the inmost corner of the passage.

And the Lord did so hide them under the shadow of His wings, that none should set on them to hurt them. It was a bright sunny day up in the garden, and the patrol had not thought of taking down a light. It was dark far down there, and his eyes were dazzled with the sudden change from the light. He could see nothing, and when he tried to feel for an opening with his hands, Matthieu contrived to bruise them so severely between the bucket and the wall, that he soon lost courage and patience. He was now at the level of the water, and the farmer, by a sudden turn of the windlass, plunged the bucket down to some depth. Terrified that he was to be drowned, he roared to be taken out, and was drawn up, his cheeks and lips blue, his teeth chattering, his limbs stiff with cold, amid the jeers and laughter of his companions.*

Marie drew a long breath of relief and fervent gratitude.

"They are gone, dear Aimée, we shall soon be free now, so soon as the soldiers are fairly away."

"Very soon; will it be very soon, mamma? it is so cold down here," said the poor child.

Marie, too, felt it very cold, now that the fever of anxiety and alarm had passed. She began to shiver, and could only keep Aimée in her arms by leaning for support against the wet slimy wall.

Their release was delayed longer than they expected. The officer had to wait the return of two of his men whom he had sent after the gipsy. They reported

* Such a story is told of Broussau, one of the Huguenot preachers. See Peyrat's "Histoire des Pasteurs du Désert."

that there was nothing suspicious about her. She had a lame boy in the cart, and said her other son had gone on before, while she stopped for a little at Farmer Matthieu's. She was quite willing, the men said, to come and speak to Monsieur le Capitaine, if he wished it.

No! if she were willing, Monsieur le Capitaine thought it very unnecessary to give her, or himself, so much trouble. And dismissing the patrol to his post, with a hint to be less officious for the future, he rode off with his party.

The farmer hastened to release his prisoners. Shivering, trembling with cold, Marie found it both difficult and dangerous to place herself and child in the bucket. But difficulty, and danger, weariness, and cold, were soon forgotten in the farmer's warm kitchen, amid the kind attentions of his good wife and two sturdy damsels, whom she had summoned from barn and dairy to assist her. A warm bed was prepared for them, into which they were laid with as little delay as possible. The mistress rubbed their limbs with woollen cloths until they glowed with heat, while the maidens bustled about preparing every kind of warm meat and drink they could think most likely to be acceptable.

Zeena had directed that they should remain at the farm until she returned for them, which she did as soon as it was dark. The farmer and his wife would fain have kept them all night, that they might see Marie look a little less pale. But Zeena convinced them that it would be dangerous; and they were forced to let her go.

Marie was unwilling to leave them without a token of her gratitude. From the jewels she had concealed

about her person she selected a diamond ring, which she asked the old lady to accept.

"Bless you! sweet one, it shines bravely. But what should I do with such a thing?" she asked, looking at it with a curious admiration.

"It is valuable. It might bring a great deal—a good deal of money," Marie stammered, blushing at praising her own gift. "You could buy something that would please you more to remember me by, something, too, for these good girls."

"Ah! sweet lady, we shall not soon forget your pretty face. These girls should not stay another hour in my service if I thought they wished payment for aught they have done. And for me, I should not forgive myself to my dying day if I could take anything from thee, whom it has been such pleasure to serve."

"At least you must take this," Marie said, throwing her arms round her neck, and kissing her on both cheeks, "and the blessing of a mother whose child you have saved."

"And thy kiss and thy blessing is more to me than all the sparklers in the world, gentle one," the good woman answered, warmly returning the caress. "God bless thee and all thine, and take thee safely out of this poor persecuted country!"

And so they parted. Marie's faith was strengthened by this manifest token of God's care. And the adventure had this good effect upon Aimée, that it made her more timid. She kept more under the cover of the cart, and gave her kind companion, Robin, less trouble in concealing her, where concealment was necessary.

After this came several days of incessant rain, making the daily journey a sore trial to Marie's patience

and strength. It was indeed comfortless to get wet through each morning in the first half-hour, to toil on for ten or twelve miles through mud and pelting rain, with no prospect of dry clothes at the end of the journey, or of any better shelter than could be found under a sand-bank or hedge, or such as the leafless trees of a wood could afford. It required all Marie's cheerful submission, all her childlike acceptance of every event as sent from a Father's hand, to enable her to bear it without murmurs, that would have been not more useless than injurious to her own health and comfort.

At last the weather brightened. The rain ceased, the sun shone, and they had a few of those fine balmy days we sometimes see in the beginning of winter, a sort of sample of the Indian summer our American brethren enjoy. On one of the brightest of these days Zeena told Marie, as they ate their early breakfast, that she should see her husband that night, and that they should now travel together.

Poor Marie's joy was unbounded. Never since their marriage had they been separated for so long a time. She had uttered no word of complaint, but she had felt his long absence very trying. Now she was to see him again, to hear his voice, to know how he was, and how he felt, to nurse him if ill, to cheer him if well, to comfort him in sorrow, to rejoice with him in happiness, to strengthen and encourage him if weak, to lean on him in his strength. Her happiness was expressed in every line of her face, in every tone of her voice, in her very carriage and motions. All was changed and bright to her eyes. The way no longer seemed tedious, for did not every step bring her nearer to him? The scenery was no longer monotonous, the country no

longer too flat ; for should she not the sooner see him approach ? She walked on with a light elastic step, sometimes before the cart in her eagerness to get on. She jested and sported with Aimée, and every now and then, half unconsciously, her feelings found expression in hymns and songs of gratitude. Zeena, who had become much attached to her, watched her with interest, and resolved that if she could help it, the husband and wife should not be again parted.

Towards the end of this day's journey their road lay through a village. In general Zeena avoided all towns, and even hamlets. But their journey had been long. The only alternative was a round of several miles, and as the village was small, they resolved to go quietly and quickly through.

It consisted of one long irregular street, with houses straggling away from, or down to it, in every style, and in every position. They met no one. The whole place seemed asleep, or very busy with their own occupations. At the blacksmith's shop alone was there any sign of life. Here were drawn up two enormous waggons with three horses each, belonging to a carrier who had found in a slight disrepair in one of his vehicles, an excellent reason for enjoying a gossip in this centre of such amusement as a blacksmith's shop always is. The waggons completely blocked up the road, and Zeena, unwilling to attract notice, stood still for a few minutes, waiting to see whether way might not be made for her, without her interference.

They were close to the shop, and could hear the master of the waggons holding forth to a circle of gaping listeners. Strange to say, his discourse was of the persecutions in Marie's own province. The man had, he said,

only the day before met with a gentleman's servant who had just come from these parts, and who had told him many strange things. And then he went on to tell Marie's own history with many additions and exaggerations.

"Besides the two little ones they took with them," he said, "they had another child, a boy. The obstinate little fool must needs be a heretic as well as his elders, and has remained for more than a twelvemonth shut up in some dismal dungeon in a monastery, rather than do as he was bid by those who were wiser and better than himself. So when the father and mother were gone, the boy was questioned if he had ever heard them say where they would go to, or anything about it. But not one word could be got from him by all the means the good fathers could use, and we know" (with a significant laugh) "their means are not always the gentlest in the world."

Zeena could bear no more. Marie had turned deadly pale, and leaned against the wall for support. Nothing could well be more dangerous than further delay. And taking the law into her own hands, Zeena seized the foremost horse of one of the teams, and drew the waggon out of her way. More concerned about getting on than about anything else, her solicitude to avoid injuring what hindered her was not oppressive. She brought the one waggon in somewhat rough contact with the horses of the other, and their plunging and kicking brought their master with his man to the door in all haste. He began to abuse the gipsy in no measured terms. She heard him in silence, leading on her own donkey with an air of cool unconcern, inexpressibly provoking. Marie, in trying to glide past to join her companions, came against him, or rather

he ran up against her. This brought his anger to a height.

"You impudent young dog," he cried, grasping her roughly by the arm. "Is that all the respect you shew your betters? What respectable man, do you think, should like to rub shoulders with a thieving rascal like you? See here now," looking at her more closely, "if this is not the very young scoundrel that was sent to prison at Dornay last week for horse-stealing, and managed to get out, and has never been heard of since. We shall have you up to the Maire, my young gentleman, and see what he has to say to you."

Zeena desired Robin to drive on as fast as possible, and returned to Marie's side to attempt her rescue. But while her captor gave the bystanders a full and particular account of her supposed escape from prison, Marie found an opportunity of whispering to her friend to leave her, and go on with Aimée.

"You must go with her to take care of her, good Zeena," she said imploringly. "You can do me no good. And you must be at the meeting-place to keep my husband quiet. If you are not, he will come on here to help me. He cannot be of the least use, and can only bring himself into danger. Tell him that I entreat him by the love he bears me, to care for his own safety, for our children's sake."

Zeena still hesitated. But at that instant Aimée, who had watched the whole scene from the opening at the back of the cart, stretched out her arms towards her mother, and cried aloud ;—

"O do not hurt mamma! O let mamma go! Mamma, mamma! come to your Aimée."

The men around were all busy, some listening to the

interesting description of the prison-breaking, others helping the carrier's man to quiet the horses, and disentangle the harness. No one heard the cry except Marie and Zeena. Robin's good little donkey cantering away, soon bore the sound even from them ; but they could see by the child's gestures, with her body half out of the cart, that the dangerous entreaties had not ceased ; and the gipsy ran forward to stop them before harm had ensued. But now a new object of alarm presented itself. At a sudden turn of the road was seen a gentleman on horseback, riding quickly towards them. He passed the little cart, checked his horse, listened, turned back, spake a word or two to Aimée, and then hastened on. The child was quiet instantly, and sunk back into her usual seat, from whence she seemed to watch the horseman with intense anxiety. The gentleman's servants now came in sight, but they passed the cart without a glance—they had evidently heard nothing.

Their master rode on to where Marie stood, surrounded by the villagers, who were disputing about the proper mode of taking her before the magistrate. The imminence of the danger had restored all her presence of mind. Leaning against the wall of the shop, one foot carelessly crossed over the other, her head a little thrown back, her eyes fixed on a distant bright cloud, she heard all they said in perfect silence, and looked supremely indifferent and unconcerned. Indifferent and unconcerned as regarded them she really felt. She felt herself entirely in the Lord's hands, and waited quietly to see what He should appoint for her.

The horseman made as if he would have passed the group, then stopped, and asked in a gay careless tone—



The Baron de Raynal recognizes Marie.

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"What have you here, my friends? What has that lad been about?"

"Stealing horses, and breaking out of the prison of Dornay, Monsieur," cried half-a-dozen voices at once.

"Ah, indeed!" in the same indifferent tone; then looking more closely at Marie, his whole manner changed. "What! is it you, my good boy?" he cried; "how glad I am to see you again—why did you go away in such haste? Why have you never given me an opportunity of shewing you my gratitude?—A horse-stealer, you fools!" to the men around, who had listened with gaping wonder to the foregoing address, "I know the lad well; he is a good, decent boy as ever lived, and very lately saved my life at the hazard of his own. Take care," very sternly, "what you are about. Your Seigneur is my particular friend, and will not be over well pleased to hear that you have brought an innocent boy who had so greatly served me, into mischief by a false charge. I know it is false, and so you shall find to your cost if you persevere in it."

The men drew back from Marie at these words. The carrier had accused her more from a wish to put her to inconvenience, than from any very strong persuasion that she was the man he called her. And he now released her with a sullen, muttered apology, and an assurance that he should never have said a word if he had known Monsieur could have cared at all about it.

Marie walked out of the open circle with a step and air of cold dignity, very suitable to a proud gipsy under the circumstances. One look of earnest gratitude she raised to her deliverer, in whom she had recognised the Baron de Raynal, and was passing quietly on, when he stretched out his hand to arrest her progress.

"No, no, we do not part so easily, now I have at last found you. You do not know how long and anxiously I have sought for you—you must not go this time without at least some token of my gratitude."

As he spoke, he had contrived to make his horse back, apparently from impatience, until a free space was round him and Marie; then stooping to put money into her hand, he whispered, "I must see, must speak to you of Hortense, of Eugène, of Hubert." Marie started, and gave a half-exclamation of anxiety. But the attention of the bystanders was fixed on the Baron and his skilfully-excited horse. He patted and caressed it, spoke to it kindly, soothing the restlessness he had himself caused, all in the most natural way possible; and when he saw that Marie had recovered herself, he said loud enough for his attendants to hear—

"And was that your good mother I passed on the road? I must see her, and tell her how gallantly her boy behaved. I am in great haste now; but where do you sleep to-night?"

Marie pointed to a small wood about half a mile on.

"Oh, that will do excellently. I am living at the château up there. Do, you and your good mother, come up to see me to-night about seven o'clock. Nay you must come. I must find some way of serving you, to whom I owe my life. Ask for my valet.—And Aubon," beckoning to one of his servants, "when this lad and his mother come to-night, shew them up to my cabinet. I wish to speak to them alone. Show them all kindness. He saved my life.—You must come," to Marie, "I must hear your history from your own lips, that I may know how I can serve you.—And you, good man," to the carrier, "if you want to find the horse-

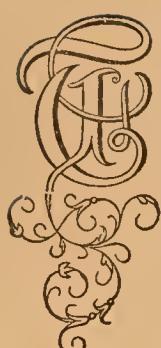
stealer, look for a man half a foot taller, much stouter, and at least twenty years older. He is fully described in the directions to all the patrolling parties. Ask them if it be not as I say. And take care how you meddle with an innocent man again."

The carrier looked sheepish. The Baron rode off, and Marie with a heart feverish with anxiety went to rejoin her friends.



CHAPTER XIII.

GERARD DE RAYNAL.



HEY had reached the spot where they meant to encamp for the night. Aimee was watching for her mother. She ran to meet her, and threw herself into her arms, weeping and sobbing from the excitement of past alarm and present joy.

“The kind good gentleman said he should set you free,” she cried, clinging to her mother’s neck, and overwhelming her with kisses.

“What do you mean, my child?” Marie did not know that Aimée had spoken to Gerard.

“He heard me call for my mamma, and he asked me who she was, and I told him,” with a proud toss of the little head, “that she was Madame la Comtesse de Blancard.”

Marie’s heart rose in fervent gratitude to God that He had suffered no evil to ensue from her child’s rashness.

Zeena scolded heartily but uselessly. Aimée maintained that she had done quite right.

“If I had not told him,” she said, “mamma might have been sent to prison, and I,—ah! then I should have broken my heart.”

The alarm had given the child a shock from which

she could not easily recover. At one moment extravagantly gay, at the next timid and nervous, starting at every sound, and clinging to her mother in trembling alarm, Marie's whole attention was engrossed in soothing and quieting her. She had no leisure to meditate on what she had heard about her boy, to speculate about what she had still to hear, or to weary for her husband's arrival. And it was well she had not. Hour after hour passed, and still he did not come. And now the gipsy, looking at the stars, announced that the time had come for going to meet the Baron.

And painful, awkward as it was, Marie must go alone. They could not both leave Aimée, as Robin was still unable to move without assistance. Having once decided that she ought and must go without Zeena, Marie went without delay or murmur. Zeena accompanied her to the gate of the avenue, which was near their encampment, and left her.

Never in all their journey had Marie felt so timid as now. To go among a set of strange servants, who were unaware of her claims to respect, either from rank or sex, was excessively painful to her. And after she had reached the door she paused for some time, ere she could find courage to raise the knocker. When her summons was answered all her difficulties vanished. She met with nothing but attention and kindness. The Baron's own valet, Aubon, anxious to shew his zeal, was waiting for her, and took her at once to his master's dressing-room.

Gerard did not keep her long waiting; and when they met, his manner was exactly what it ought to have been, respectful, nay deferential, and so completely

ignoring any cause for embarrassment as to remove at once that measure of it under which Marie had been suffering. This was not their first meeting; he had been several times at Blancard during the past twelve-month to concert measures for her safety, and her boy's freedom. And Marie had been often struck by his eager zeal in her service, and his tender sympathy with her and hers. But neither then nor now had there been, in word, look, or tone, the slightest indication of a warmer feeling than might be awakened by her, as the playmate of his childhood, as the sister of one friend, the wife of another.

He entered at once upon the business of the moment. He apologized for asking her to come to him, explaining that he could not have sought her without awakening attention, perhaps suspicions, which in present circumstances might have proved dangerous. He went on to tell her that he had heard of her flight almost immediately after it had occurred. He was travelling in Franche-Comté, when he met in with the soldiers in pursuit of Theodore. The gipsy lads, after luring their pursuers on to Saintfont, had skilfully suffered them to meet again with their track, beyond that place, on the direct road to Geneva. And at the time the Baron met the party they were in full pursuit in that direction. The officer in command knew the Baron, and, aware of the interest he took in the family, he told him all he knew about them. Gerard at once set off for Blancard, to find out where Marie was, and whether he could help her. He took the road he thought she was most likely to pursue, and closely scrutinized every travelling party he met, of whatever rank or character.

On the afternoon of his second day's journey, he met the Lajous. They were disguised as travelling show-people. A monkey, a marmot, a dancing-dog, the wife's sweet voice and cithern, the children's fantastic dress, and dancing, formed the simple features of their exhibition. But such as it was, their show had met with favour wherever they had come, and under its disguise they had hitherto passed in perfect safety. They were exhibiting in the market-place of a small town, when he passed through it.

"And did Hortense dance?" Marie asked, her pride wounded for her child, which had been silent and still under all her own humiliations.

"No, indeed," he answered heartily, "she is the petted child, the queen of the party. You yourself could hardly care for her more tenderly, watch over her more jealously than does the good mother in whose charge she is. And even if she did not, Bernard looks upon her as the apple of his eye, and no annoyance and no privation is suffered to come near her. She does not make her appearance at all at the exhibitions; and whenever they stop at any place, her comfort and safety are the first things thought of."

He had not recognised any of the party. But he observed, that one of the men looked significantly at him several times. And ever on the watch for anything that could guide him in his search, he waited patiently till the performance was over, and then, after a glance at the man, he sauntered slowly out of the village. As he expected, the man followed, and made himself known. It was Bernard. He knew Gerard's interest in his master and mistress, and was anxious that he should follow Marie, and protect

her, should danger arise. He contrived further, that Gerard should see Hortense, that he might tell her parents how well and comfortable she was.

“And she bade me tell you, that every one was good and kind to her, that God made every one take great care of her, and that she never forgot that she was under the shadow of His wings; and she was not afraid.”

Marie’s heart swelled with gratitude to God for His lovingkindness, His tender care of her helpless child.

“But you spoke of Eugène,” she said. “What do you know of him?—Ah, then,” as she saw that he hesitated to answer, “it is all true that the man said. They have tortured, they have murdered him!”

“Not so, not so, Marie,” he cried eagerly. “Your fears carry you too far. I have seen him, have spoken with him. He looks well, and says he has not been unkindly treated. Only,” again he paused, and looked at her compassionately. She implored him to tell her the worst at once.

It was soon told. The Count’s property had been confiscated. And having no longer anything to expect from Eugène, as his father’s heir, and irritated by his firm adherence to the right, Father Joseph had given him over to the civil power. He had been tried and condemned to the galleys for life, as an obstinate heretic.

To the galleys! A poor child of eleven years old! Her boy, her gay, bright, beautiful boy! She thought of all the horrors of such a fate, of the hard labour, the cruel punishment, the privation, the exposure, the companionship, and her heart’s agony was greater than

could be expressed. She bowed her head on her knees, and strove mightily for submission with the striving of one on the very brink of despair.

“O my Father!” she cried aloud, “it is Thy will; make me willing that Thou shouldst do all Thy will. O my loving Saviour! take my soul now into Thine own hands, and save me from sin. I am Thine, we are Thine, O save us!”

Gerard’s whole soul was deeply moved to see her suffer thus. But with the delicacy of true feeling, he forbore to intrude on her grief. He did not try to say one word of comfort, or even of sympathy. But placing a glass of water within her reach, he withdrew to the farther end of the room, that she might feel herself alone.

Her prayer was answered speedily. The Lord soothed and comforted her, as a mother might comfort her weeping babe; and, far sooner than Gerard could have believed possible, she looked up and spoke to him again. The expression of her face, the tone of her voice, told of a depth of sorrow most painful to contemplate. But it was a quiet sorrow, borne in the strength of One who was higher than she.

“And my father, and Hubert?” she asked.

Gerard returned to her side, and looked at her with respectful admiration, with tender pity for a moment before he answered.

“Your father, dear Marie,” he said slowly and gently, “your father’s sorrows are all over now.”

Again was her head bowed in meek submission to a Father’s will. But this time the blow was far less severe. Ah! how sweet did the rest of that home appear to her wearied, aching heart! For herself, she

must mourn that she should see his face no more ; but for him, she must rejoice that he was where sin and sorrow cease.

“ And Hubert ? ”

Hubert had been sent to the galleys a few weeks before.

The worst was now told. There was alleviation in all that remained. Although Gerard had drawn so liberally on his influence with the higher powers, it was not yet exhausted. He could not obtain any mitigation of Eugène’s sentence ; but he succeeded in getting him sent to the gang to which Hubert belonged. This was a great comfort to Marie—how great, those only can conceive who have been in circumstances so forlorn as hers. Her boy would not then be quite alone and friendless. He might have little intercourse with his uncle ; but they could at least see each other. There would be at least one person to mark with interest and sympathy whatever the other might have to endure, and in her heart she thanked the Lord who had so ordered it.

The destination of Hubert and Eugène was Guadalupe, and in this, too, Gerard saw ground of comfort. The governors of these distant colonies were not, he said, for the most part, infected as yet with the rancour felt against heretics in France. Many of them were just, humane men, who treated the convicts with consideration, often even with tenderness. Instances had been known in which they had connived at their escape to British colonies, where they could be free ; and if ever interest had effected this in any instance, it certainly should not be allowed to fail in this one.

“ That must be as the Lord will,” Marie thought,

with a feeling more resting than hopeful. "The hearts of all men are in His hands. This is all my confidence, that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

Gerard went on to tell of his interview with Eugène. He had failed in his efforts to see him before he left for Marseilles, from which port he was to sail; but he had followed him, and had overtaken the band, and seen Eugène only a few days ago.

"I saw several gangs of convicts," he said, "while searching for the one to which he belongs. And among the different guards there were many fierce, brutal men, who delighted in witnessing the sufferings of their prisoners; but those who have charge of your boy, Marie, looked kind and compassionate, and really treated the poor men with all consideration."

"Thy goodness, Thine abundant lovingkindness, O Lord!" Marie said softly to herself.

"I—I—" he hesitated. He did not like to tell of his own kind deeds. But the mother's anxiety must get every possible relief. "I gave the guards a little money to be gentle with him. I got permission from the officer in command to give him a little. It may help him should he be under less pitiful leaders.—Nay, it was a small thing," as Marie held out her hand to him with a deeply grateful look.

"Small for one so full of considerate kindness as you are," she said gratefully. "And my boy knew you?"

"Yes, at least I told him that I was a friend of yours, and should see you soon, if possible. He seemed very glad to hear that. He is tall of his age and thin; but he looks healthy, and even in such circumstances there was a look of quiet peace, almost cheerfulness, about him I can hardly describe. He bade me tell you, with

all the love of his heart, that you must not grieve much for him ; that the good Shepherd had kept His promise, and had taken him in His arms, and carried him in His bosom all the way—all the way, he repeated, with a beaming look ; and that he never had, and knew surely he never should want."

He was glad to see Marie's tears flow plentifully as she listened to these words. He knew they must be a relief ; but how great a relief he did not understand. He did not know how much gratitude had to do in calling them forth, nor how full Marie's heart then was of joy in her Saviour's tender kindness.

She rose to go, she held out her hand to him, unable to express the thankfulness she felt ; he was greatly moved. At that moment he would have given all he possessed to be able to tell her the feelings of his heart —to be able to entreat her not to forget him. But her peace of mind was far dearer to him than his own, and they parted as they had met, without one word or look that could give her the least uneasiness.

She never saw him again ; he saw her in the distance several times ; for having heard that they were on their way to Rouen, he followed them as closely as was consistent with their safety, in order to be at hand to help her in any emergency ; and unseen by her, he stood very near her when she embarked in the vessel that was to convey her for ever from her native land.

He never married ; he lived a solitary but not an unhappy life. Personal feelings increasing his natural disgust at the conduct of the King and his ministers, he retired altogether from public life, and devoted himself to the cultivation of his estate, and the welfare and improvement of his tenantry. This was the business

of his life, as the ardent pursuit of science and general literature was its recreation, and the assisting all who were oppressed was its happiness. His infidelity had been shaken by witnessing the power of a living faith, as shewn forth by Marie ; and the study of the Bible was not forgotten amid the other studies he engaged in. From a mistaken sense of duty holding him back from what must deprive him of the power of benefiting those dependent on him, he never made an open profession of the Huguenot faith—but a true Huguenot he was for many years before his death, and he died rejoicing in the glorious truths of the Huguenot's gospel.

Marie traversed the avenue much more rapidly than she had done before. She made sure of finding her husband at their encamping place, and her heart thirsted for his support and sympathy. It would be such a comfort to rest once more on his breast, to know that every thought and feeling were understood and shared in, even before expressed. And ever as the thought occurred to her, she quickened her pace that she might be the sooner with him.

Now she was near the spot—all was quiet, too quiet, she thought, why was he not watching for her ? Might he not have come to meet her ? She passed hastily round the heap of brushwood Zeena had piled up to shelter them from the wind. The gipsy sat alone by the flickering fire, Robin lay asleep in the tent formed of the covering of his cart, and through the open doorway of the little turf hut erected by the fruit-watchers last chestnut harvest, she could see that Aimée was its only occupant.

“ My husband ? ” she asked in breathless anxiety. Zeena explained. She had received a message from

Dibon. He and the Count were quite well and safe, but had found that the road they had purposed to take might be dangerous, and they could not now meet them for another day or two. She spoke very unconcernedly. They were safe, that was enough for her. She neither understood nor shared in Marie's restless craving for her husband's presence. Marie made no appeal to her sympathy. Turning with loathing from the offered supper, she crept into the hut, threw herself on her face beside her sleeping child, and gave full way to her disappointed feelings.

She had counted so surely on having him with her, and so sorely needed his affectionate sympathy; and now she knew not when she might see him. It seemed the last bitter drop in her overflowing cup, and her grief was unrestrained, and even passionate. At such a time to be left alone! When her heart had been so wrung with grief for her only son, to be obliged to bear it all without one friend to stand by her and comfort her!

Alone—without a friend! Ah, Marie, did not One Friend at least stand by your side even then? Was not He looking upon you with compassion far more tender than any earthly friend could feel? Yes, Marie felt it was so. Soon did her eye again look up to meet that eye of love ever watching her so tenderly. Soon in the words of the Psalmist did her "heart return unto its quiet rest," and acknowledge that "the Lord had dealt bountifully with her." Most bountifully. Had He not that very day saved her from danger and difficulty in the way she could least have expected? Had He not sent her sure intelligence of those she loved, and sent it by so kind a messenger? How little had she

hoped to hear of her Hortense so soon ! What comfort to know that she was so well cared for ! - Even her father's release from suffering ought to be a cause of gratitude, and Hubert's release from the loathsome dungeon. The galley ship with all its hardships could hardly be so bad as the prison from which it had released him. He could at least look up into God's free sky, enjoy His sunshine, the fresh breath of heaven, and find interest and pleasure in the variety of the ocean.

And for her own Eugène ! Ah ! how great was the gift of God's grace to him. How often had she despaired of ever making any impression on her wild, thoughtless boy, of ever seeing him brought to know and to love his Saviour. And now the Lord had taken the matter into His own hands, and had Himself taught him to profit. The Lord who was his Saviour had been his Teacher. He who had borne his sins, and atoned for them as his Priest, had been his Prophet to reveal to him the things that concerned his everlasting peace, and would be, and was his King to rule over him, to rule for him ; even He who had been made " Head over all things for His church." Here was the sure resting-place for the anxious heart of the mother. Her boy was safe in the hands of Him who is King of kings, and Lord of lords, safe for time, and safe for eternity. Ah ! what a rich mine of comfort was in that thought. She remembered how often, when he had been by her side, in full exuberance of health and gaiety, when she had rejoiced in his beauty, his happiness, his affection, and pleasantness, yet her heart had been chilled by the sudden fear, that only for this life was she to possess him, that the day might

soon come when she should be called upon to part from him for ever. Now she could look forward through the short days of separation upon earth, to the glorious meeting in heaven, never, never, to part again ; and which possession was most valuable ? The answer to her own question, was a long breath of thankfulness.

She sat up, and pushed back the hair from her heated brow. She placed herself again, as it were, in the presence of her Saviour, her Lord, and mourned with shame over the excessive grief she had indulged in. Had the Lord led her all this way, and had she not learned to trust Him ? She looked up into the starry sky, until she seemed almost to see Him, looking down upon her in tender reproach, and seemed to hear His voice say, as to His disciple of old, “ Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me ? ” Her tears flowed freely. Tears of repentance, refreshing to her wearied spirit, precious tears, called up by the appreciation of the marvellous riches of His love. She lay down quietly beside Aimée, and fell asleep, while the tears were still wet on her cheek.

On the evening of the following day Theodore and Dibon joined them, and the meeting was even more joyful than Marie had hoped. Her husband was looking so well. The constant call for exertion, the regular, and pretty severe exercise of every day, had done him the greatest good. His mind had been called away from its morbid brooding over its own state, his over-active imagination had had little leisure to work. He had lost the expression of almost exulting excitement she had observed in their last meeting at the cave ; but he

looked alert, manly, energetic, ready to go forth to vigorous action, or quietly to endure suspense and anxiety, without wavering or impatience.

His joy at again getting possession of his wife and child was unbounded. He would hardly suffer Aimée to leave his arms for a moment.

It was so pleasant, he said, once more to feel little arms clinging round his neck.

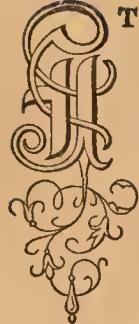
"And, oh, it is such happiness once more to have you to rest upon," said Marie, as she laid her head upon his shoulder with the feeling of a wearied child, who had at last found a resting-place.

"Not more of a happiness for you to rest, than for me to be rested on," he answered, looking down into her face with an expression of great satisfaction and love.



CHAPTER XIV.

THE GALLEY SLAVES.

T is a cold, stormy, November day. The wind blows fiercely across a wide space of level country, as if it gathered fresh fury from every mile it passes. The high-road has no hedges to afford shelter from the blast, or to break in upon and conceal its weary length of straightness. A large party are coming along the road, but through this driving rain we cannot see them very distinctly. There is a mixture of bright scarlets, blues, and yellows, and a shining as of arms, and that is all we can distinguish. It may be a party of soldiers. But now the storm has swept by, and carried the rain-cloud on its wings. We can see more clearly. Soldiers are there, but the flashing of metal which caught our eye came from chains not from bayonets, and by the scarlet and yellow dress of shame we recognise a party of convicts.

Look at the old man, one of the foremost two. Mark his bowed figure, his drooping head, his feeble step, his thin white hair, his dim and wandering eye. He seems hardly to know what is passing around him, or where he is. Perhaps his thoughts are busy with the days when he sat at the tables of princes, when the high and the noble of the land delighted to honour him, when his presence was a favour, his opinion an oracle, his influ-

ence a sure bulwark to all to whom it was extended. Perhaps they are in his happy and beautiful home, in lovely smiling Provence, with all its fruits and flowers, its bright skies, and sunny days. Perhaps he thinks of the wife of his youth, torn from his sheltering arms in her feeble old age, shut up for the few remaining years of life within four stone walls, never to see any face but that of her jailer—never to hear any voice but his, to pass her second childhood alone, uncared for, unhonoured, far from all she knows and loves. Perhaps he thinks of his three gallant sons, one sleeping in his martyr's grave, another a voluntary exile, wandering through foreign lands, without money to buy food, clothing, or shelter for his motherless little ones, and with health broken by hardship and suffering, unable to earn it. The third, his talented one, gifted with real genius, with all its fervid aspirings after the great, the good, the beautiful, but burdened too with more than its usual share of sensitiveness, of delicacy both of constitution and temperament, and doomed to toil for life under a tropical sun, at the drudgery of field labour, with the companionship of the degraded and criminal. Perhaps his heart dwells upon her the lamb of his flock, the child of his old age, the fair, the gentle, the loving, the godly one, now transformed by the cruelty of her persecutors into the raving mad woman, ready to tear in pieces whoever comes within her reach, were it even the mother who bore her, ready to utter the most horrid blasphemy that can be suggested to her, against the God and Saviour whom even from childhood she had so loved and reverenced. But rather I guess, by the occasional upward glance of the eye, his thoughts have risen above this earth, to the home of rest and

peace reserved for him by Him who has kept His servant by His power, through faith unto salvation.

His companion, a strong young man, looks upon him with compassion, and strives to bear the greatest share of their mutual chain ; and yet his compassion is strangely mixed with contempt. For he knows the old man's history, and thinks he must be a fool, to give up lands, and rank, and fortune, and friends, only that he might hold by one religion rather than another, as if any religion could be worth such a sacrifice. Ah, poor fellow ! had you only known how well worth far more than that is the true religion, you might not have been here, to suffer the just punishment of your crimes.

Behind these came some couples of regular galley slaves, coarse, brutal, depraved, with their cursing blasphemous complaints, and their still more painfully blasphemous jests. It is well that the good old man's mind is so abstracted that he does not hear so as to understand those terrible words. Still better, that the last of the party, that young child, has lagged so far behind, that his ear escapes the pollution.

Yes, he is a child, a mere child—look at his smooth cheek, his slight figure in that strange dress, his slender throat, his small wrist and ankle, round which they found it so difficult to fasten chains, intended for limbs of a very different size. It is our Eugène, poor Marie's fondly cherished boy ; he is very weary, and lags far behind the rest. He cannot drag on these small bruised and bleeding feet any faster, and his guards have pity on him, and have quietly taken off his chain, and do not strike him as they do the others who do not march in proper time. Perhaps Gerard's gold may have had some share in this indulgence—but I would fain hope

not all. I would fain hope that the man who has now given him his hand, and helps him on, has a little boy at home, and that something more precious than gold has the merit of those kind encouraging words, those pitying looks.

Eugène looks much older than when we saw him last. The expression of the small childish mouth that used to speak of so much mischief and mirth, is now very grave and quiet. But as now and then the bright eye glances up to the heavens, you can catch the beaming look of which Gerard spoke, you can read in it the triumphant and trustful feeling which was expressed in his simple words,—“all the way, all the way.”

Eugène is thinking of his meeting with his uncle Hubert. Gerard had told him that they were to meet at Marseilles, and he has heard the guards say that they shall reach that town on the following evening. What happiness it will be to see again the face of one who knows and loves him! His mind goes back to the bright days of the past, when uncle Hubert’s visit had always been such a cause of rejoicing to the whole family. It was uncle Hubert who taught him to ride; and he thinks over the many happy rides they have had together, and a very boy’s sigh of regret he breathes to the memory of his beautiful white Arabian, with all its gentle affection, all its graceful motions, and pretty playfulness. But the half-formed tear is chased away before it falls, as the thought passes through his mind, “But I did not love Jesus then,” and he recalls all the exceeding riches of love which his Saviour has poured forth upon him, and feels that all the world would be too little to lose for the sake of knowing and loving Him.

On the following night they reached Marseilles. They

were marched to the convict barracks. The officer, for the sake of the Baron de Raynal, ordered that Eugène should be freed from his chain, and put in a small cell by himself. It was a poor place, six feet square, with no more light or air than could find their way from the passage through a narrow opening above the door, with no furniture except a log of wood placed to serve as his pillow. But such as it was, its quietness and peace made it seem a paradise to the weary boy. He wished to share it with one to whom it would be as welcome as to him. He eagerly asked his guard to allow the old man to come there too. And when the other told him gruffly to mind his own business, and take his own good things and be thankful, he offered to take the old man's place, and holding out his small thin wrist, he said imploringly—

“Put his chain on me, I can bear it better than he can. Bring him here, and allow me to sleep beside his comrade.” He represses a slight shudder as he speaks, for he has been told that the crime for which that comrade suffers, was the murder of his own child.

The soldier looked at the boy curiously.

“You are a strange child,” he said; “I’ll see what I can do for you. Is the man any friend of yours?”

“No; but he is the friend of Jesus, and Jesus loves him,” he answered simply.

The soldier looked at him again with a curious wondering look, and then went away. In a few minutes he reopened the door, and pushed the old man in, saying—

“There, it is to that *pauvre enfant* you owe this favour. The *pauvre petit* wished to take your chain in your stead.”

The old man’s step was very feeble. He staggered

painfully, as if he had been so long accustomed to his heavy chain that he could not balance himself without it. He looked bewildered. His mind wandered. When Eugène went up to him, and timidly offered to take his hand, he drew back hastily.

“Who are you? and why are you here?” he asked in a startled tone. He almost fancied that it was the spirit of one of his own boys restored to happy childhood, as they came to him in his dreams.

“I am Eugène de Blancard. They have sent me to the galleys because I would be a Huguenot.”

“Thee! thee to the galleys, poor babe!” he cried, his sense slowly returning to the present scene; and taking the child in his arms, he wept over him as he had never wept for his own sorrows.

It was sweet to the forlorn boy to be thus mourned over and caressed. He clung to his aged friend as he might have done to his own grandfather. They sat down together on the log of wood.

“And thou didst wish to bear my chain for me, poor child!” the old man said, his mind for the first time taking in the meaning of the soldier’s words. “How was that, my little one? Why didst thou wish to do so?”

“Because Jesus loves you,” he answered confidently.

“Jesus loves me. Yes, he does. Blessed Lord Jesus loves me!” the old man exclaimed, his withered face lighting up with confident joy, and he raised his hands and eyes towards heaven. “And of thee, my child?” he added after a few minutes of silent rapture, “Does Jesus Christ love thee too?”

“Ah yes, He does love me so much. I was a bad thoughtless boy, and did not care to hear about Christ,

or to think about Him. But He forgave me all that, all my sins, and took me in His arms, and has carried me in His bosom all the way. O how much he loves me!"

Eugène went on to tell his new friend his little story, and the other listened with all the simple interest of a child. With a child's openness and garrulity he told Eugène about his children. By his enfeebled memory all their recent sufferings were forgotten; they presented themselves only as the merry little ones of bygone days, as such he spoke of them, as such Eugène thought of them, and he wondered whether they had learned to know Christ's love, and whether they might be allowed to stay at their own happy home with the mother his friend spoke of as being with them, or whether she might not be forced to fly as his had been. Upon the pretty little fairy Lisa, of whom the old man spoke, his fancy particularly fixed, and he thought she must be something like his own Aimée.

Before they lay down to sleep they sang a hymn together, the old man's feeble trembling notes blending strangely with the clear voice of the child. And then they knelt down together, and Eugène prayed. The old man could not have connected words or thoughts together, but he joined heartily in the child's simple petitions. They were exactly suited to his case. So they lay down in each other's arms. And, when the guard came next morning, he found Eugène in the sweet unbroken sleep of childhood, the old man in the still more unbroken sleep of death. His arm, stiff and cold, was still round the boy, and Eugène's warm, flushed cheek lay close to the withered cheek of the dead, and his warm breath stirred the thin grey locks with a motion like life. It was a touching sight. The

rude soldier's heart was so moved that he used the utmost care and caution in lifting the sleeping child from his strange resting-place, so that he might not awake, and become aware without preparation of what had occurred.

When he heard of it, Eugène shed a few bitter tears; but, young as he was, he had come to understand how death might be a relief, and his heart was very full of the meeting with his uncle.

He was marched down to the quay at once, for the vessel was nearly ready to sail. Another band of convicts was getting on board, and he stood for some time waiting his turn. He eagerly scanned the ship and its crew, looking for the one face he knew. It was an old vessel in bad repair, fit for nothing but the transport of convicts. The government, it was said, rather preferred old vessels for that purpose. The prisons, the galley ships, even the colonial settlements overflowed with heretic prisoners, and it was difficult to find accommodation for the hundreds weekly added to their numbers. So a vessel was every now and then filled with heretics alone—robbers and murderers must be better cared for—and, if it went to the bottom, why no great harm was done.

Of course Eugène did not understand that such was the mode of reasoning about him and his fellow-voyagers; but he saw with pleasure that all the convicts marched into the vessel wore the same quiet, subdued expression, very different from some of the companions of his recent journey. At last came one, a tall, powerful-looking man, with a noble countenance. Was it, could it be Uncle Hubert? No, Uncle Hubert did not stoop so much. Uncle Hubert's skin was not so yellow.

Uncle Hubert's hair had not one tinge of grey. And yet that step, that look, that eye. It was, it must be Uncle Hubert, only grown very old. And his heart beat painfully quick and high as he watched him move slowly across the deck, and take the place pointed out to him.

His own turn came at last. With a sort of breathless expectation he suffered himself to be led over the gangway, and delivered up by his former guards to those who were now to have the charge of him. Then, as the superintending officer paused a moment, as if surprised at the appearance of his new prisoner, the child fell on his knees before him, and raising his hands imploringly, he cried—

“Let me be with Uncle Hubert. Here,” drawing out the gold Gerard had given him, “will this pay for it? It is all I have got. Will this be enough to get me a place beside Uncle Hubert?”

The officer looked bewildered, but he spoke gently to Eugène, and raised him from his knees.

“I know not how you got the gold, my child,” he said with a smile. “It is a strange thing for a convict to possess. But you, *pauvre enfant*, are a strange kind of convict. Keep it, and tell me who Uncle Hubert is, and where.”

Eugène explained, received the desired permission, and bounded over the deck to his uncle's side, his small form, his eager, springing step, his joyful voice forming a strange contrast to the haggard, drooping, silent figures among whom he passed.

“Uncle Hubert, Uncle Hubert,” he cried, “I am to be with you! We are to be chained together; I am so glad!”

Hubert stood where he had been placed, his arms crossed, his head bent a little forward, his eye looking far, far away, as to some land of peace and rest. He started and look round, as the child seized his hand, with that glad “Uncle Hubert.” For a moment he did not recognise him in his convict’s dress. How could he think his Marie’s fondly cared-for boy could be there? Then, as the repeated “Uncle Hubert,” and the bright, familiar eyes looking up into his, flashed conviction into his mind, he staggered back, as if struck with a mortal wound, and sinking down on a bench behind him, he covered his face with his hands, and groaned aloud.

Eugène sprang on to his knee, threw his arms round his neck, and strove to draw down his hands.

“ You must not be vexed about me, dear Uncle Hubert,” he said. “ You know it is God who has sent us here, and it must be all right, for God loves us better than we can ever know. It is so good of God to send us in the same ship.”

His uncle caught him in his arms, and strained him to his heart. He could not compose himself sufficiently to speak; but yet the child’s simple faith went to his heart, and brought it strength and comfort.

Their voyage was very comfortless. The vessel was small, inconvenient, and terribly crowded. Not more than half of the convicts could sleep under cover at a time. They had to pass every alternate night on the deck, without shelter from the biting wind, from rain or snow, or the spray which, in rough weather, dashed quite over the ill-constructed ship. The miserable den, down stairs, was, in its own way, nearly as uncomfortable as the open deck; and indeed, in fine mild

weather, much more so. There was a great want of air and of space. The prisoners lay close together on the floor, and had literally not room to stretch themselves straight out. Now and then they tried the plan of some standing while the others slept. But, weakened by disease and want of sufficient nourishment, and heavy with the unwholesome drowsiness engendered by the bad air, those standing were generally unable to keep awake, and often falling down in their sleep, severely injured themselves, and the friends on whom they fell, with their heavy chains. Had they been convicts of the ordinary class their health could not have withstood such exposure, privation, and discomfort; but here there were no useless murmurs to aggravate their misery, and injure their health; and no fretfulness towards their fellow-sufferers. Now and then bodily weakness might draw forth a few complaints, or constitutional infirmities of temper be shown in peevishness and irritability. But these were rare exceptions. In general, there was among them all one spirit of calm submission to a Father's will, of cheerful acceptance of every circumstance as from His hand, and of kind sympathy with fellow-sufferers. Here there was no distinction of rank.. The peasant and the noble, the unlettered mechanic and the man of genius and learning were united in one common fate, and closer still in one common faith, one common hope, with one Father, one Saviour, one Holy Spirit to provide for, to save, to comfort, and teach them.

For the most part they were not unkindly treated, their uniform cheerful submission to their hardships softened the hearts and awoke the pity of their guards And if now and then, a surly fellow was inclined to

vent on them the ill humour his own discomforts had aroused, they knew how to make allowances, and were neither irritated nor indignant. They felt that the poor soldiers had no precious faith to sustain them, and that they could not but feel it hard to be so wantonly sacrificed by the government they had faithfully served.

For, in truth, the danger of their situation was not less than its hardship. The vessel was barely safe in calm seas, or for a short voyage. Three several storms had they passed through; three several times had captain and crew abandoned all hope; three several times had the near approach of death called forth from sailors or soldiers all the various manifestations of feeling, from hard, sullen indifference to cries of terror and agonizing prayers for help to all the saints in the calendar; three several times had the God-fearing Huguenots opportunities of shewing how little they feared aught else, how calmly, ay, in some cases, how triumphantly they could welcome death in any form.

They had passed through the storms, but not scathless. The vessel had leaked from the day they had left the harbour, and now incessant labour at the pumps could hardly keep her afloat. They had been driven out of their course, and their voyage so lengthened, that both food and water had become fearfully scanty. As may be supposed, the convicts' portions of both were of the smallest, and the sufferings of hunger, thirst, and excessive fatigue at the pumps, were now laid upon them, to be borne with the same brave patience as all the others.

Poor Eugène bore his share of all privation: al-

though, through the tender care of his uncle, and the kind pity of all the convicts, it was made as light as possible. A drop of their precious water, a mouthful of their biscuit, were reserved by many, to be added to the boy's scanty portion. His health and strength stood out wonderfully. Often as they lay on the open deck under the pelting rain, with no better cover than their scanty clothing, Hubert feared that his charge could hardly survive the night. And as he made him nestle ever closer to his bosom, and strove to shield him with his own body, he would think sadly that the morning light must show him the fading of this, his last treasure, his last tie to home and the bright past, the last earthly comfort he possessed. But each day found the boy in apparent health, though weak and thin. And his cheerfulness never flagged. With a child's inexperience, he was the last to dread danger; with a child's elasticity, the first to see hope; with a child's forgetfulness, he was spared much painful brooding over past happiness, and with a child's want of foresight, much anticipation of future sorrow. He lived in God's presence, basking in the sunshine of His love, and trusting entirely from hour to hour to His care and sovereign power over all things.

"Ah well, it is God who sends it, and He will give us His pitying love under it, His Spirit, that we may be able to bear it," he would say, when some fresh danger or suffering arose to try their faith. And when there came a few hours of comparative peace, when the sun was bright, the sea calm, and the guard for the time kind, his heart would be filled with precious, refreshing gratitude to the Father from whose loving-kindness all had been given.

But now a fourth storm arose, worse than any that had gone before. The vessel was dismasted. When the storm had passed, it lay an unmanageable log in the water. The captain had lost all reckoning of their position, and the food and water remaining could not be made to last more than one other day. Despair seized both crew and soldiers, and with despair total insubordination. Their officers lost all control over them, and were forced to submit to their dictation.

They resolved, so soon as the sea was calm enough, to take the boats. They hoped to be able to reach a cluster of islands they had passed on the previous evening. And, at any rate, they said, they should get rid of these cursed heretics, whose presence brought disaster and ruin, and the weight of whose chains was sufficient to sink the vessel.

The captain did his best to dissuade them from such a cruel abandonment of men wholly dependent on them, and was at first resolute not to be a party to it; but when he saw the men carry off the last morsel of food, the last drop of water, his fortitude gave way. The cruel death by famine he could not face, and he yielded to his men's entreaties to go with them. He stipulated that the convicts should first be set free from their chains. This work of humanity was begun, but before it had proceeded far, the crews in the boats, alarmed at the appearance of a cloud, coming up before the wind, clamoured for an instant departure, and threatened to set out without those who did not come immediately. So the freed convicts were left to relieve their brethren as best they might.

They stood on the deck, a grave, silent band, watching the departure of their late masters, when, suddenly,

as the last boat shoved off, loud and clear rose a song of praise from a sweet, childish voice. All in the boats looked up, startled and a little awed at such a sound in such a place and time. It was Eugène singing the 107th Psalm : “ Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He saved them out of their distresses.” He stood on the high poop of the vessel, his slight, boyish figure clearly seen against the sky, the heavy chain at wrist and ankle coming out in strong relief as he raised his clasped hands in the fervour of his feelings, and his upturned countenance beaming with a kind of holy triumph as he poured forth his whole soul in his song.

One and another of his comrades took up the boy’s strain, and ever louder and fuller it swelled over the waters. The sailors did not like it. It gave them a feeling between awe and self-reproach, and they rowed ever harder and harder, to get beyond the sound. They reached the islands in safety, after a hard day’s labour, but some of the softer-hearted declared to their dying day, that they could never forget the sight of that band of grave, composed men, looking after them, nor the sound of their psalm, as it followed them far over the sea.

The song had ceased, and all stood for a few minutes silent, thoughtful; death was approaching swiftly, surely; but it was an unspeakable relief that they were now to meet him in the company only of those to whom he had no sting. The last solemn moments of life were not to be disturbed by the terrors of men to whom this life was everything, or by the sullen despair and curses of the more hardened, who could even in such a situation dare to blaspheme. With the calm courage

of Christians they looked their danger steadily in the face ; but theirs was the true wise courage which caused them to help themselves, to use every exertion to better their condition, leaving the issue in the hands of the Lord.

The first thing was to get rid of their chains. By a common impulse their child-companion was the first they freed. He gave a glad shout, "I am free, I am free !" and seizing the chain, he heaved it overboard, bending down to hear its sullen plunge, and to watch the water closing over it.

"There you are gone, you hateful thing!" he cried ; then as he raised himself and caught his uncle's eye fixed upon him with an expression of deep thought, almost of sadness, he added doubtingly, "Perhaps I should not call it hateful. It was God who put it on me."

"And was it not God who freed you from it, my boy?" asked Hubert ; "you can praise Him for that, cannot you?"

"Ah ! yes I can ;" and again his voice rose exulting in the 103d Psalm, "Bless the Lord, O my soul ; and all that is within me, bless his holy name."

With as much regularity as if still under the discipline of their guards, the strong among the convicts formed themselves into bands to work at the pumps by turns. Some aged, and weak in health, were totally exempted, and every hour added to the number of this excepted band, as hunger, thirst, and fatigue rendered one and another unable for exertion. It was early morning when the boats departed, and wearily and heavily the hours of the long day dragged on, bringing no help, nor even the hope of any.

It was night. Eugène lay alone on the deck, suffering such agonies from hunger and thirst, as I hope none of my young readers may ever be able to imagine. In the first joy of recovered freedom, he had for a time forgotten his weakness and craving for food. But many suffering hours had passed since then, and he lay still, and in pain, hardly able to move or even to breathe. Hours passed in this manner—morning was near when his quiet dull feeling of exhaustion changed into a more painful state of restlessness and feverish excitement. His head grew giddy and confused, wild thoughts crowded in his mind, strange fearful imaginings took the form of realities. He felt frightened, and he was all alone. His uncle Hubert, as one of the strongest of the party, remained at the pumps, and the men who lay near the boy were too much exhausted to be able to encourage or comfort him, to speak to him, or even to understand when he spoke to them.

“ Ah, I’m dying !” he cried, as he tried to rise and failed ; “ and dying all alone, and I cannot think of anything, all is so strange, so wild. But,” laying himself down again, and smiling faintly as the thought occurred, “ it does not much signify, my Lord Jesus Christ will think for me and take care of me ; He has me in His arms, I am lying on His bosom, and need no one else,” and with that sweet smile still on his lips he fell asleep.

He dreamed he was again at home ; he was ill, and his mother held him in her arms. They were under his favourite tree at the water-side. He saw its fresh green leaves, heard the wind rustling through them, felt the soft, cool, mossy grass, on which they sat and watched the bright river gliding so gently by. His

mouth was parched, he asked for something to drink, Hortense and Aimée came at his call. They looked so bright and fair, like angels, with shining white garments and pure silver wings, and they came up to him bearing baskets of delicious fruit and jars of cool drinks, and his mother took them and held them to his head ; but ever as his lips parted to drink, an unseen hand seemed to draw him back, and not one drop could he get to cool his parched tongue. Then he saw his mother's look of agonized anxiety and compassion, and he felt her tears drop faster and faster on his burning brow.

"It does me good, your tears are so cool," he tried to say, and awoke. The cool drops were there in truth, his face, his hair, his clothes were wet with them. It was rain, God's precious, blessed rain, as he called it. He opened his mouth to catch the drops, sucked up a little pool he found in a hole in the deck, and felt refreshed. All his companions had been awakened in the same manner, and were busy collecting vessels to catch the precious fluid.

Eugène was strengthened by his short sleep, and rose and went down the ladder to seek his uncle, that he might share in this treat. He met him coming away from the pump. He took Eugène in his arms, and strained him silently to his heart ; after a few minutes, he said solemnly—

"Death is very near now, my Eugène ; we can no longer work at the pumps. The vessel is fast sinking !"

Eugène shuddered. The slight relief afforded by the rain had so revived his hope that he felt all the more painfully this sudden revulsion.

"Cannot we ask God to help us, dear uncle?" he whispered.

And they knelt together at the foot of the ladder, and made their case known to Him in whose hands are the winds and waves.

They rose, and went slowly up the ladder. As Hubert's head came above the deck, he started, sprang quickly up the last steps, looked hurriedly round, and cried in a glad voice,—

“ Land, land! O Lord, blessed be Thy name, while we were yet speaking Thou didst hear, before we called Thou didst answer;” and he took off his cap, and reverently bowed his head in adoring gratitude.



CHAPTER XV.

THE INDIANS.

 Es, it was land—they had drifted into a small bay through the dark hours of night. The man appointed to watch for land, or for passing vessels, had been overcome by fatigue, and in the absence of light and of hope had fallen asleep. Like the others on deck, he had been awakened by the shower; but like them, too, his whole mind had been fixed upon quenching his fearful agony of thirst. And indeed up to this moment, the thick veil of rain had shut out all view; but now it was passing away—the morning sun was shining out, and in its cheerful light lay the quiet shores of the bay on three sides of them.

They had been driven to the shores of South America, but that of course they did not know then; all they could see was a narrow strip of soft smooth sand, and beyond it a range of low rocks and sand-hills, shutting out all view of the interior, save where a pretty broad river coming into the bay gave them a short vista up its banks, and afforded them glimpses of trees of strange but graceful and beautiful forms and foliage, specially beautiful to eyes which had so long rested only on the tossing sea.

In the meantime the vessel was gently gliding on

with the tide towards the land, when suddenly she struck upon a sand-bank, she staggered back as if trying to free herself, struck again, shivered, and then remained nearly motionless, the quieted waves breaking gently against her. There was a moment of confusion and alarm, but the sea was so calm, the shore so near, it was difficult to realize danger. Hubert had been coming more and more to take the lead among them, and to him all looked for counsel he found it difficult to give. For himself, he could easily swim to shore even with Eugène to support, but he knew not what sharks or other dangerous inhabitants these seas might contain. Not more than half his companions could swim at all ; few even of that half had strength now to swim so far, while many were too utterly exhausted to do more than raise their heads, to gaze with longing eyes upon the land which promised so much, and yet seemed so unattainable.

While he considered all these difficulties, he observed for the first time a group of men on the heights watching the vessel. They were tall in stature, dark in skin, and nearly naked. As Hubert looked at them, they began to move along the ridge of rock with a peculiarly dignified, deliberate step, and one by one disappeared down a declivity. The convicts watched anxiously, and in a few minutes a number of canoes were seen coming round a point of land from the direction in which the men had disappeared, and making for the vessel.

Eugène was by his uncle's side. He eyed the dark, savage-looking men with some suspicion, and asked Hubert if he were not afraid of them.

“ The hearts of all men are in the hands of the Lord,

my boy," he answered, "as well as the winds of heaven and the waves of the sea. He who has saved us from the one, can save us from the other also;" and the boy's fears were calmed.

The canoes were now very near, they were headed by a large highly ornamented one, in which lay an elderly man of grave aspect and dignified demeanour. When within a short distance from the ship, at a signal from him, the men ceased paddling. He rose, displaying a fine handsome person, and addressed the convicts in a strange, very musical language. When he found he was not understood, he had recourse to signs. He seemed to ask their object in coming there.

Hubert had fastened a white cloth to a spar, and waved it in token of peaceful intentions. He bowed low, laid his hand on his heart, shewed his empty hands, and used every gesture he could think of to manifest harmlessness, and a wish for amity.

The Indian chief pointed over the sea, and looked the inquiry, "Had they come far?"

Hubert bowed assent.

Another motion, implying, "Did they mean to go farther?"

Hubert made his companions separate, so as to shew the wrecked state of their vessel.

But this did not seem to convey any very clear idea to the Indian's mind. In truth he had never seen a ship before, and looked upon this as merely a clumsy kind of large canoe. Supposing that the vessel having struck on the sand-bank was the only difficulty, he tried to encourage its owners by signs that it would float off again at the high tide.

Hubert then endeavoured to go through the panto-

lude of a storm succeeded by the sinking of the ship, and the drowning of its inmates.

The other understood him with surprising quickness. He beckoned the other canoes to approach. They had been waiting at a respectful distance. A consultation was held. Then the chief turned again to Hubert, and made a sign towards the land, as if inquiring if they should like to go there.

Hubert bowed low with an expression of assent and gratitude. The chief spoke a few words. A canoe came up to the side of the vessel, received on board a certain number of the convicts, rowed off, and its place was taken by another. In this manner, in perfect order, and nearly total silence, the whole convicts were taken on shore. Hubert and Eugène were the last. Several of his companions were nearly helpless, and Hubert remained to superintend the difficult business of lowering them into the boats.

As each canoe reached the shore, the men were led up to a particular spot where they were all gathered together, guarded by Indians, bearing strange-looking clubs and long lances. The chief's canoe had borne no part in carrying the men to land. He had gone first of all, and taking up his position on a low rock, had watched the whole proceedings in grave silence.

When all were collected, he rose and led the way up a rude flight of steps, to the heights from which he had first observed the vessel. The convicts were made to understand that they were to follow; and those who were too weak to obey were supported, or wholly carried by the natives, as their several states of exhaustion required.

From the heights they obtained a view over a wide

tract of fertile, gently undulating country. Close to them was an encampment, or village composed of mud huts, each shaded by one or more palm-trees; and large fields of maize, stretching away on every side, spoke a more settled mode of life than the Frenchmen had fancied it likely their new friends would lead.

Each owner of a hut led into it one, two, or three of the guests, according to the accommodation he could afford. A number of women and children were about the doors, and gazed upon the new comers with great but restrained anxiety. The wan, haggard looks, and feeble gait of all, and the total prostration and helplessness of some of the party, seemed to excite the women's compassion. And when Hubert, as spokesman, or rather signsman, contrived to make them understand how long it was since they had tasted food, the squaws hastened to set before them the best they had to give.

Milk in various forms to drink, fresh fish broiled on the coals, parched corn, and a kind of soup-pudding, or pudding-soup of maize to eat, formed a delicious feast to our poor mariners. Eugène could have eaten and drunk everything that was set before him; but his watchful uncle was too wise to allow him more than a small quantity of both food and drink, and the boy who used to be so wilful, yielded a quiet obedience to even such painful restraint. He found his reward in total exemption from the sufferings over-indulgence brought upon some of his less prudent, or perhaps more ignorant companions.

By the time the meal was discussed, the kind squaws had spread for them beds of dried grass, on which they were glad to stretch their wearied limbs. The men

and women of the village went out to their own occupations, leaving their guests to sleep in peace, with only a few men who were appointed to watch them.

Eugène, Hubert, and another of the convicts, shared the same bed. The boy was the first to awake. He had enjoyed more rest, and had endured less fatigue, than the others during the last few nights. He rose softly, and stole out of the hut to explore the strange country. The men on guard stood, or sat at their various posts, patient, motionless. With real intentness, but with the apparent indifference suitable to their ideas of dignity, they watched Eugène's every movement, while seeming not even to see him. He took little notice of them. There was a group of men round the sachem, under a large tree. They seemed in consultation; and guessing that it might be about himself and his friends, Eugène, with instinctive delicacy kept aloof, that he might not even seem to intrude.

He walked to the heights overlooking the sea. A thrill of interest and strong emotion ran through him, as he looked out over the waves that had so nearly been his grave. Their vessel was almost hid. The tide was nearly full. The water covered the deck. Nothing was visible except the tops of the broken masts. Eugène's eyes filled at the thought of what might have been their fate, and of the Lord's goodness in rescuing them from it.

His meditations were interrupted by a light touch on his shoulder. He looked round, and saw an elderly Indian of pleasant countenance beside him. This man's life had been full of adventure. Many years before he had been taken prisoner, and carried far north

by a hostile tribe. Having escaped from them he was tracking his way homeward, when he was made prisoner a second time, this time by a boat's crew come ashore in search of water, from an English vessel cruising along the coast. The captain of the vessel took the Indian with him, intending to teach him his own language, that he might act as interpreter if they met others of his nation. After many wanderings, the man was finally landed at Massachusetts. The Puritan settlers of that province were beginning to take an interest in the benighted natives of the land. He was kindly treated, acquired a knowledge of their customs, language, and some dim ideas of their religion. He had made his way to his own people some years before this time, had lost a good deal of the knowledge he had acquired, but could still speak a little English. He had been absent in the morning, but had been hastily sent for, in order to act as interpreter.

"I Foam-of-the-Sea," he said, touching himself; and then Eugène, "Who you?"

Eugène understood English, though he could not speak it well. One of the monks of Lamont had come from England, and had taken a pleasure in teaching the boy his language.

"I am Eugène de Blancard," he answered.

The Indian tried to repeat it, exciting the boy's merriment by his failures. He looked a little grave, and continued the conversation by again pointing to himself, and saying—

"I Indian, and you?"

"French boy," said Eugène.

"French!" he did not understand that very well,

but pointing to the sea, he asked, “ From far over the waters ?”

Eugène nodded assent.

“ And why come here ?”

“ The King made us come. He sent us in his ship.”

“ The King ” was a title the Indian understood, but he asked,—

“ You no want to come then. How King make ?”

Eugène showed the deep scars imprinted by the chain on his wrist ; and partly by words, partly by gestures, made the other understand how they had been treated. The answer to the next question of, “ What for King do so ?” required more command of the English language than he possessed, and he referred the Indian to his uncle, who now joined them, having come to seek Eugène.

Finding that the man had some understanding of whom he meant by the word God, or great Spirit, as Foam-of-the-Sea called Him, Hubert, in a few simple words, explained that God had commanded His children to worship Him in a certain manner, that their King had forbidden them to do so, and that because they chose to obey God rather than man, the King had been angry, had put chains on them, and sent them away from their home and country.

The Indian listened with great interest, and with a single emphatic “ good,” at the close of the narrative, went back to the chiefs. Hubert and Eugène were now joined by a good many of their friends, and all stood watching the group under the tree, feeling how much their fate might depend upon the reception their story might meet with.

Foam-of-the-Sea seemed to repeat what he had heard with much animation. A murmur ran round the assembly. The chief rose, and made a short speech, which was apparently received with cordial approbation. Foam-of-the-Sea again approached the Frenchmen, and told them to accompany him into the circle of chiefs.

The Sachem had sat down again. But when they were brought before him, he rose, and advancing with grace and dignity to Hubert, he took his hand, and spoke a few words in his soft, musical tongue. Foam-of-the-Sea interpreted.

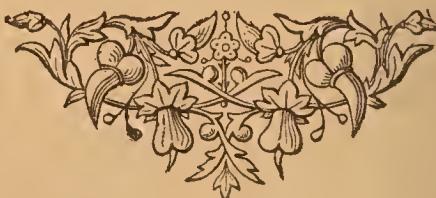
“ We are glad to see our white brethren. We are glad our white brothers are obedient to the Great Spirit. If our white brothers will stay with us, we will give them lands, and help them to build wigwams, and make canoes, and we will give them maize to sow in their fields. Are our white brothers content? ”

They could do no otherwise than accept so generous an offer. The pipe of peace was lighted and handed round ; and then the Sachem led the way to the spot he purposed to give to his new friends. It was beautifully situated on the banks of the river, near enough the Indians’ village for all purposes of protection and mutual assistance, distant enough to insure the convicts a certain amount of quietness, and freedom to observe their own customs without molestation.

The Sachem’s people nobly fulfilled his promises. Huts were erected in a surprisingly short time, and ample supplies of food of every kind poured in upon them. The poor shipwrecked mariners were soon most comfortably housed, their own ingenuity and mechanical skill supplying them with many articles of

convenience and ornament, of which the Indians were destitute. A strong feeling of amity speedily sprang up between the two parties, which was strengthened by a constant interchange of kind offices. The Indians taught the French to hunt, to make canoes and to manage them ; and the French instructed the Indians in many of the arts of civilized life, and gave them a knowledge of that religion for which they had been willing to sacrifice so much.*

* See Peyrault's History for the facts of a company of Huguenot convicts being wrecked on the coast of South America, and most hospitably received by an Indian Sachem, whose sympathy and respect were powerfully awakened on learning the cause of their banishment from their native land.



CHAPTER XVI.

THE EMBARKATION.

 **E**are back again in France. I must take you once more on board a ship. Theodore and Marie have reached Rouen in safety. They were here obliged to part from their kind gipsy friends. Zeena said her presence could only increase the dangers of their passage through the town. Both parties were sorry to separate: they had become much attached to each other. The Blancards tried to persuade Zeena and her husband to accept of some of Marie's jewels, as a token of their regard more than as payment for their services. But they positively refused. Nay, further, learning that in the hurry of changing dresses at his first setting out, Theodore had neglected to secure the jewels and gold Marie had concealed for him, they pledged themselves to find means to restore them to him; and this pledge they took much trouble to keep.

Zeena had procured them more suitable dresses, Theodore now appearing as a mechanic travelling with his wife and child in search of employment. She carefully inspected them to make sure all was correct and proper; then she, her husband, and Robin, bade them a most affectionate farewell, and saw them enter the town.

They felt painfully helpless, thus deprived of those on whose wisdom and guidance they had for so long a time depended. By Zeena's advice they went straight to a humble kind of inn near the quay. Here Theodore left Marie and Aimée, while he went out to get the necessary information and make the necessary arrangements. It was long before he succeeded. For, too conscious of his position and circumstances, he was haunted with a vague fancy that every one he met had penetrated his disguise, and he wandered about for more than two hours, before he could make up his mind to address any one. When at last he did take courage to inquire about vessels from a sailor on the quay, his manner was so timid and hesitating, that the man at once guessed the truth, or at least sufficiently near it, to have been dangerous to Theodore, had the other not been an honest English sailor, whose whole warm heart was engaged on the side of the Huguenots.

He gave Theodore all the information he could desire, told him of a Dutch vessel in the harbour, in which he knew the requisite accommodation could be procured, and offered to row him out to it at once, that he might make his own bargain with the captain.

No sooner said than done. In a wonderfully short space Theodore had visited the vessel; had arranged that himself, his wife, and child, should come on board soon after dark; was safe at the quay; had made an appointment with his English friend for seven o'clock at night, when the sailor undertook to take them all out in secrecy and safety; and had returned to the inn to wait the approach of night with what patience he could muster.

Marie had had a slight alarm in his absence,—a party of gendarmes had come to search the house for suspicious characters. But in this matter was seen the tender care of the Lord who had hitherto watched over their safety. Theodore was absent, Aimée asleep, and Marie, by far the most self-possessed member of the party, the only one who was seen.

She met their scrutinizing glance with an air of such quiet indifference as at once disarmed their suspicions. She answered the few questions they asked with all readiness,—told from what part of the country they had come, the length of time they had taken to the journey, a time which agreed excellently with their supposed object of seeking for work,—said truly, she did not know where they meant to go, or what to do next, that her husband had gone out to make inquiries before they should fix their plans, and that she expected him back every minute; and she glanced up from her work, of mending her child's frock, and looked towards the door, as if for him, with the most natural air in the world. They left her perfectly satisfied.

Night came. They reached the quay unobserved, save by one dark figure whom they did not see. It was Gerard de Raynal. The English sailor was punctual, piloted them skilfully through the numerous vessels in the harbour, and, with much satisfaction, saw them safely on board their own.

They were kindly received by the Captain. He told them his cargo was all made up, his sails in order, his ship riding with a single anchor, everything ready to sail early the following morning, by which time he hoped to have on board his last supply of provisions, for which alone he was waiting.

They found a number of refugees in the ship ; some new arrivals like themselves, others who had been for many days in concealment in the ark of refuge. They were obliged to remain below deck all day, but were permitted to come up and breathe the fresh air as soon as it was dark ; and many a group Marie and Theodore met, walking about, and rejoicing in the prospect of freedom on the morrow.

The Blancards sat a little apart from the others ; Aimée more than half asleep, her father and mother silently luxuriating in the perfect rest to both body and mind after their late fatigues and anxieties. Suddenly the captain appeared among them. His manner was composed and deliberate as usual, but the news he came to tell was startling.

He had been watching lights on the quay, he said, and had made out that a party of gendarmes were coming off in a boat. His ship might be the object, and, therefore, it would be advisable, that all suspicious characters should be concealed.

As there was not one of his passengers who did not come under this head, they all at once prepared to obey his directions. He led them down into the hold. His cargo had been so packed as to leave a considerable space at the back, expressly intended for concealment. A narrow opening had been left among the huge barrels and boxes, and through it the refugees passed in single file.

The space was small for so many. As they stood closely pressed together, there was not room for any change of posture, any motion to relieve the weariness of standing so long. But as I said of the convicts, there were no murmurs, no selfish crowding, or squeez-

ing others. Each seemed only anxious to accommodate the rest. The natural politeness of the French people was aided by the feeling that it was for a common cause they suffered, that it was a common Lord they served.

When all were in, barrels and boxes were moved into the opening. The captain passed his light carefully over the whole mass, to make sure all was right, and then hastened up stairs to receive the guests, the splash of whose oars was now heard very near.

Perfect stillness reigned through the large company of prisoners. Every faculty was absorbed in that of hearing. A tread of heavy feet on the deck, the sound of imperious voices. They were then really come. A long, patient kind of breath was drawn, as if announcing that one faint hope had vanished, and again all stood silent and patient, watching the course of the search. They could trace it by the sound, down into the captain's cabin, into the sleeping places of the men. And hark! what sound was that? Yes, the hatch is raised. They are coming down into the hold. A slight thrill ran through the whole assembly. The great moment of trial was come. Marie felt the arm on which she leaned tremble a little.

"The Lord shall hide us under the shadow of His wings," she whispered.

Aimée was clinging to her mother's knees, hiding her face in her dress. She heard the words. They reminded her of the well. They encouraged her, and, at the same time, gave her a feeling of awe. If the Lord was to hide them under the shadow of His wings, how near must He be to them! And this feeling kept her more still than anything else could have done.

The prisoners could see the flashing of the lights carried by the soldiers, could even now and then through the crevices distinguish the forms of the searchers. The Captain's quiet voice was heard.

"You see there is nothing here except barrels and boxes."

"And how do I know what may be behind these barrels and boxes? Set to work, men, every one must be moved."

Another slight tremor seemed to shake the whole company, but was instantly quieted. They were in the Lord's hands, and, still and patient, they waited the issue which He might choose to send.

If the soldiers had hit upon the opening by which the prisoners had entered, their task would have been comparatively soon over. But the sailors, who helped them to remove the casks, took good care to make the business as tedious as possible. Barrel after barrel, box after box, were removed, and now they were very near. The prisoners seemed to hold their breath in expectation.

"Ah, ha! I see something; we have found the nest at last!" cried one of the soldiers, as they came to the last barrier between pursuers and pursued.

Marie started and turned pale at the sound. It was the voice of Gaspar, the man who had been the chief agent in the cruelty which had ended in the apostasy of her husband, in the death of her child. She stood directly behind the last cask which was removed. It was her arm Gaspar seized, as he sprang forward with another exulting shout. He raised the lantern to her face, and recognised her instantly.

"Ah, ha!" he cried triumphantly, "I have you

again. A gallant Baron interfered between us last time. But who is there to help you now?"

"The Lord God Almighty, who doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth," she answered, looking him steadily in the face.

A sneer curled his lips, but was instantly changed into a look of startled surprise. The vessel had given a plunge. There was a slight rocking from side to side, and then all became aware that she was moving swiftly through the water. The commanding officer and his men, with fearful curses, rushed to the ladder leading to the deck. But the hatches were closed, and not the slightest notice was taken of all their threats, remonstrances, and entreaties. They were now the prisoners, and must bear their confinement with what patience they could muster.

So soon as the Dutch captain found that his refugees were likely to be discovered, he returned to the deck, and quietly took the only measures that remained to insure both their safety and his own. Fully aware of his dangerous position, he always kept his vessel in such a condition as to be able to sail on the shortest notice. He had not yet got all his provisions on board. But it was better, he thought, to run the risk of a little starvation on board his own ship, rather than meet the same fate in a French prison. He cast off his anchor. His men in perfect silence loosened the sails. The breeze was favourable, and the gallant little vessel sailed out of the harbour in grand style, as if conscious how triumphantly her master had outwitted those who had fancied the game entirely in their own hands. When the hatches were opened, and the soldiers re-

leased, they were far out to sea, far beyond all hope of making their situation known, or of avoiding the fate which awaited them, that of being carried off to Holland, prisoners to the very men they had come to convey to prison.*

In the meantime, the refugees were pouring out the gratitude of their hearts to the Lord. One of their number, a venerable white-haired man, who had been the pastor of a Huguenot church, conducted their devotional exercises, and there was not one heart which did not join cordially in his fervent thanksgivings and earnest prayers for grace to serve and glorify the Lord, who had so signally appeared for their deliverance.

Their voyage was as prosperous in its continuance as its commencement had been singular, and was too rapid to permit the scarcity of provisions to be felt.

It was a bright winter afternoon when they arrived at Rotterdam. I should have told you before that Marie had learned from Gerard de Raynal that the Lajous had by his advice arranged to wait at Rotterdam until joined by the other members of their party. The hearts of the father and mother were full of impatience to see their child. But the town was so crowded with refugee families, that to find her might have been a work of difficulty and must have been one of time, had it not been for Bernard. The warm-hearted old servant was nearly as impatient to see again his well-loved master and mistress, as they were to see their Hortense. Since his arrival he had spent most of his days on the quay, watching every vessel that came in. And Marie had barely put her foot on shore

* Founded on fact.

before she saw his honest beaming countenance, and read in it the answer to the question she could hardly find words to ask. Hortense was as well as possible, and their arrival was all that was wanting to make her perfectly happy.

As the poor refugees were burdened with no luggage, and had already rewarded and thanked their worthy Captain, they were ready at once to go with Bernard to a neat little cottage in the suburbs, where the Lajous had established themselves.

Hortense met them at the door. She and her playmate, Lisa Lajou, had been impatiently looking out for Bernard, whose services were required in some of their sports. She had seen him coming, but had not recognised her father and mother. She had not realized the dress in which they might come ; so she was waiting in the doorway, hoping that the strangers with Bernard would pass on, and leave her in comfortable possession of him. As they came near, the hearts of the parents were too full for speech, but Aimée's prattling voice fell familiarly on her sister's ear. Hortense's heart beat quick, her cheeks flushed, she bent forward to listen.

“ But, Bernard, where is Hortense ? ” was now distinctly heard, and in an instant she was in her mother's arms.

Few of the refugees were so comfortably accommodated as our friends. Pierre Lajou's show had succeeded so well, that instead of his journey costing him anything, he had been able to lay up a little money for the maintenance of his family on their first arrival in a foreign land ; and long before it was expended, he was so happy as to obtain an excellent engagement as a gardener,

for very high wages. Their cottage was as comfortable as possible, and its best room had been carefully reserved for the family of the Count, whom they still considered as their liege lord and master.

A meal, half dinner half supper, was quickly prepared, the very best that Jeanne Lajou could procure on such short notice, and Pierre and Bernard served with as much reverential attention as if they had been waiting upon the Count and Countess in their own château.

So soon as the table was cleared, Bernard and the Lajous withdrew, and the little family were left to the full enjoyment of being once more together, and once more alone.

Hortense's history was heard with deep emotion and interest ; and great was the mother's happiness to see how her child had grown in acquaintanceship with her God and Saviour during their separation. Simply and joyfully did Hortense refer every little incident to God's care and love, and very constant and precious seemed to have been her sense of His presence.

" And, mamma, do you know Bernard has come to love Christ ? He told me so ; and he said," speaking in a low voice, and with eyes brimming with tears of deep feeling, " he said that I had helped him. That when he saw that I always seemed to be with Christ, and to be looking up to Him, he began to think—what if the Lord should really be so near ! and then he felt how sinful he was, and that made him so afraid, he could do nothing but hasten to Christ's feet. And oh ! mamma, Christ was so full of love that He heard Bernard the moment he called, and washed him in His blood, and gave him His Holy Spirit, so that he was

able to love God, and to call Him his God and Saviour. Are you not glad, mamma?"

"Very glad, darling—glad that our good Bernard should now be the Lord's servant, and glad that my little girl should have been so honoured of her Father as to be allowed to help in the work of making him so." And Marie kissed her fondly. At the same time she looked anxiously after her husband. He had started from his chair when Hortense began to speak of Bernard, and was now pacing the room with hurried steps and a gloomy brow.

He had been tolerably cheerful during the few days they had journeyed together towards Rouen; but it had been a cheerfulness quite apart from religious peace—a cheerfulness proceeding only from the regular, wholesome exercise of their daily walk, and the distraction to his mind afforded by the many incidents they met with. Whenever Marie had tried to begin religious conversation, the old gloomy look had returned, and he had always avoided, as much as possible, giving her an opportunity of doing so. In the comparative repose and inaction of their voyage, his cheerfulness had gradually disappeared; and now she could read in his countenance an amount of despondency almost as great as before he left Blancard.

She was glad when Hortense proposed to take Aimée to introduce her to her friend Lisa Lajou, and she was thus left alone with her husband. She went up to him, and gently passing her arm within his, walked up and down the room with him once or twice without speaking. At last she said in a tremulous voice, her eyes filling with tears—"Dear, dear Theodore, will you not come to the Lord, who waiteth to be gracious?"

His answer startled her. After a moment's struggle with his feelings, he poured out his whole mind to her, and she then found that his diseased conscience was accusing him of a second great sin, in leaving his home to avoid the punishment which, as he said, God had sent upon him.

"Do not speak of it, Marie," he cried passionately, when she tried to combat this false notion. "If I had not loved wife and children better than the Lord, I never should have consented to save them at the expense of again denying Him."

Marie tried to recall to his mind, that it was the very dread of denying the Lord which had induced him to fly; but he would not listen to her. And she soon found that argument only strengthened him in his own opinion, and that she could, for the present, only help him by her prayers.

When she went to the kitchen, to summon Hortense and Aimée, a bitter feeling of envy rose to her heart at the scene she witnessed. Jeanne Lajou sat by her husband's side, with her children round her, and Pierre read to them from the Holy Bible, with a look and voice that told how straight every word went to his heart, and how much joy and refreshment he found in them.

"Why was he taken, and my husband left?" rose in Marie's heart; and the sore questioning and conflict could only be stilled by earnest crying to the Lord who had saved her in so many temporal trials, and who now stood up for her help against enemies, worse than any she had yet met; even against the evil of her own faithless heart, and the temptations of Satan, her relentless adversary.

CHAPTER XVII.

PAULINE.



s you may suppose, Marie was impatient to get to Amsterdam, that she might see her mother and sister. She found that the Lajous meant to go there also. They too expected to meet friends in Amsterdam, they said. This was true. But it was not their only reason for wishing to accompany the Blancards. They felt, that so long as the Count continued in his present melancholy, abstracted condition, their mistress would stand in need of all the help and comfort she could get. And they believed that in household matters, in looking after the children, and such like things, Jeanne Lajou could be of great use.

Their estimate of Marie's need of help was not mistaken. Poor Theodore was more of a burden than an assistance to her. His fancied sin in fleeing from persecution, was never absent from his mind. His morbid fancy brooded over it continually, and continually aggravated his despondency, by exaggerating every detail of his sin, and drawing fearful pictures of God's fierce indignation against him. He could not bear the least reference to the past, the least hint of hope for the future. The day they arrived in Amsterdam, he happened to see a French gentleman he had

once known, and, from that moment no persuasion could induce him to go out into the streets, lest he might be recognised. He knew, he said, how much all good men must despise him, and although his own contempt he must bear, he did not think it necessary to expose himself to the contempt of others. So Marie was forced to exert herself all the more, to arrange about the disposal of her jewels, and to make her search for her mother, with no other counsel or support than Bernard could give.

The last business, seeking her mother, was the first attended to, and proved more difficult than she had expected. No one of whom she inquired knew, or had known the Marquise de Beauchardis, and she was beginning to think she had never reached Amsterdam, when she was directed to a physician of eminence in the town, who, she was told, knew every one.

To him she went. He was a pleasant elderly man, and to Marie's great relief, spoke very good French. The want of a common language between herself and those to whom she had applied, had been a sore hindrance. Now she could understand, and be understood with perfect ease.

The doctor at once said he had known Madame la Marquise; he had, in fact, attended her on her death-bed.

Death-bed! Then Marie was, indeed, an orphan. And the knowledge of the mournful truth was to reach her now, at the very time when her wearied heart was most earnestly longing for some one on whom to rest for sympathy and comfort, for some one to look up to for guidance and counsel. Now, when the whole burden of her husband's and children's safety and

welfare was laid upon her, and her spirit was ready to faint under the weight, now she was to hear, that in all the wide world there was not one to whom she could turn for help. And this to her who, a few short years ago, had hardly realized what the words *sorrow*, *care*, *anxiety*, meant. It was a sore trial, and for a few minutes Marie felt as if it were more than she could bear.

But the thought of her sister roused her to endurance, and called her from all contemplation of her own share in this affliction. For Pauline was weak-minded, and quite unfit to take care of herself, or to manage her own concerns. Marie trembled to ask what had become of her.

The kind-hearted physician saw her anxiety, appreciated its cause, and hastened to relieve it. Mademoiselle, he assured her, was well taken care of and comfortable. Some of his own wealthy and benevolent country people had founded an asylum for the young girls of refugee families, who had been deprived of their natural protectors, and whose age, education, or habits of life, unfitted them for gaining their own livelihood.* Mademoiselle Pauline was there, and he could take Madame to see her whenever Madame chose.

Whenever she chose! Oh, she must go at once, without any delay. And though her knees trembled, from the emotion and fatigue she had passed through, she rose instantly and prepared to accompany him.

They had not far to go. A short walk brought them to the place—a cheerful airy house, standing in a beautiful well-kept garden. Marie was led through a large hall, where the younger girls were engaged

* See Weiss's "History of the Protestant Refugees."

with the tutors and governesses their age required. She was greatly pleased with the healthy cheerful looks of the young students, and the kindly manners of their instructors. She and her guides, the good doctor and the matron of the institution, a motherly kind woman, passed through this hall, and up to the upper storey, where there were a number of smaller rooms in which the elder girls could occupy themselves as they liked, and receive visits from their friends.

In one of these was Pauline, busy at embroidery work, with about half-a-dozen girls about her own age. She looked up when the matron opened the door, with the placid smile Marie so well remembered, gazed for an instant doubtfully at her sister, and then sprang forward to throw herself in her arms, crying—

“ Oh, dear Marie, how glad I am that God has brought you to me, as I asked Him to do !”

Her heart was warm enough to make her enjoy to the full this meeting with her sister, while her intellect was too weak to suggest any cause for surprise that it should take place then and there, any speculation about Marie’s change of dress, or about the way she had found her out. It was enough for Pauline that she had asked God to bring Marie, and that He had brought her.

There was nothing disgusting in poor Pauline’s imbecility. With a small, slight figure, delicate features, the fair skin and large blue eyes of a Norman, she looked like a sweet, gentle child ; and a gentle, docile, happy child she was, in mind and character. Foolish in worldly things, in those things which concern our salvation she was wise beyond most. And the warmth of her love to her Saviour, the strength of

her faith in Him, might have shamed many an old Christian in full possession of all his senses.

She showed no curiosity about the cause of Marie's being in Holland, but she asked eagerly for all the dear ones she had left in France, and shed bitter tears over the death of her father, and the exile of her brother, and the little nephew she remembered so affectionately. Her tears were however soon dried, and her mind diverted, like a little child's, from her grief, when Marie and the kindly matron began to discuss when or how her little nieces should be brought to see her, or when she should go to see them.

Marie felt some difficulty about Pauline. She could not bear that her sister should be a burden on the funds of so useful an institution, while she and her husband had means to support her, and while there were so many others who might require its assistance more than Pauline. But the matron readily removed these scruples. Mademoiselle de Beauchardis, she said, was no burden: Her beautiful embroidery brought more money to the institution than she cost it. She imparted her own exquisite skill to others, and infused into all her own spirit of cheerful industry. They should all be so sorry to lose their dear, good Pauline.

And as Pauline seemed anxious to remain, and Marie knew not very well what comfort or accommodation she could offer her in her own home, the matter was so settled, for the present at least.

Marie had arranged with the Lajous that the two families should inhabit the same house, and should share the household expenses between them. Marie had disposed of her jewels, and had realized a considerable sum by the sale, but so long as they knew

not where or how other funds were to be procured, it was necessary to be economical in the expenditure of what they had. A servant was a luxury not to be thought of. Marie took upon herself as much household work as Jeanne and Bernard would permit, and made up for her forced exemption from the heavier tasks, by inviting the young Lajous to share in the instruction she gave her own children. Profiting by Pauline's example, she employed her spare moments on embroidery, which sold readily, and at a good price. Pierre was again in full employment, and well paid. A dealer in curiosities and knick-knacks engaged to give Bernard as much work in fine wood-carving as he could execute. So that altogether the resources of the family were fully adequate to their moderate wants.

Although this mode of life was so different from what she had been accustomed to, Marie enjoyed great peace and contentment. She would have been quite happy had it not been for the two causes of anxiety which constantly weighed upon her. Her husband's continued depression of spirits, and listless unhealthy inaction of body and mind, and the thoughts of her brother and child, of their probable fate, and probable present condition and sufferings. These two great troubles effectually banished her old *gaieté de cœur*, but could not destroy the quiet resting spirit wherewith the Lord had blessed her during the last year or two.

Never did any one better obey the command to rejoice in the Lord; and as all must find who do obey it, truly could she say, "The joy of the Lord is my strength." Realizing the exceeding riches of her Saviour's grace, the minuteness of His care, the tenderness of His love, the almightyess of His power, and

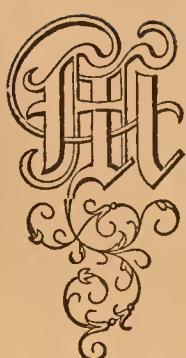
feeling her entire dependence on Him, she learned to lean upon Him all day long, to look to Him for guidance in daily difficulties, strength in daily duties, and support under daily trials as entirely and trustingly as she had rested on Him for safety under the perils of her dangerous journey.

Pauline was a great help to Marie in this matter of looking to the Lord in trifles, often so much more difficult than looking to Him in great things. Poor Pauline, or rather happy Pauline!—of her it might indeed be said that she “walked with God.” At all times, in all things, she kept Him before her eyes. The joy in His love was constant and unbroken, her confidence in Him like a child’s, entire and undoubting—like a child’s was her faith, simple and unreasoning. Unable to weigh the comparative value of things, it never occurred to her that anything could be too small to tell her loving Saviour; and by her simple confidence in His full and ready sympathy she honoured Him more than many a wise Christian who does not think a trouble too small to allow it to disturb his peace, and mar his service to the Lord, but yet, in the pride of his wisdom, judges it too trifling to be cast on that Lord who is the burden-bearer of His people.



CHAPTER XVIII.

ANOTHER CHANGE.



ARIE'S peaceful life at Amsterdam was not to be of long continuance. Theodore's dull, listless despondency changed into a most painful restlessness. The near neighbourhood of France troubled him by the memories it recalled ; and even the safety and comparative comfort of his present position increased his unhappiness, as making the banishment from his native land less of a sacrifice. Every comfort he enjoyed, every token of security which presented itself, increased his gloom by lessening his hope of atoning for past sin by present suffering.

When this restlessness had reached its height, he heard unexpectedly of a company of French gentlemen who proposed to join together for the purchase of a vessel in which to convey themselves and families to North America. He caught eagerly at the plan. The dangers and privations it involved, rendered it only the more attractive in his eyes ; and that his wife and children must share these privations was hardly a drawback, as he felt that their sufferings must always affect him more nearly than his own, and as he believed that a sinful regard for their safety had been the principal cause of his flying from the trials which he believed the Lord had meant him to endure.

A new and powerful desire overcoming his nervous dislike to meet any of his countrymen, he sought out the principal movers of the scheme, and readily obtained their consent to join them.

Marie heard of the arrangement with mingled feelings. Fully realizing all they might have to endure on the voyage, and in the unsettled country to which they were bound, she was yet careful to throw no obstacles in the way of a plan which had at least this recommendation, that it had aroused her husband to something of his old energy. She could not but regret the breaking up of her peaceful home ; but at the same time she could not but rejoice in the prospect of being nearer the colony to which her brother and Eugène had been sent. She recollects Gerard de Raynal's hope that they might even effect their escape, and get to America ; and she could not, by all the wise reasoning she employed, altogether banish such hope from her own mind.

Pauline wished to go with her sister ; and although she felt all the responsibility of taking her from her present safe and comfortable home, Marie could not refuse her request.

Again the Lajous broke up their home and their plans to accompany their master and mistress on their new expedition. They alleged a desire to get quite away from France, a conviction that they should always feel restless so long as they were near it. But Marie understood them better now, and was fully aware that attachment to herself, and compassion for her unprotected condition had the greatest share in their resolution. She was deeply grateful to them, and deeply grateful to her loving Father, who had sent her such warm, such trustworthy friends.

The vessel was bought. It was an armed one, and all the male passengers were fully armed also. They were determined to prefer death to a French prison, or to the French galley-ships, and in the event of an encounter with French men-of-war, had bound themselves by an oath never to yield. And so with many prayers for God's protection and blessing, with a hearty and cheerful confidence in Him who is the Lord of hosts, of Him whom the waves and winds obey, they set sail.*

I said too much when I said that Marie fully realized the dangers and privations of the voyage. They were far greater than she could have imagined. Soon after leaving port they were chased for the greater part of two days by a large French man-of-war, and were only saved by a dense fog which, baffling to their enemies, acted as a sure hiding-place to them, and enabled them behind its dark veil to pass their pursuers, and speed safely on their way.

A few days after, they were forced to fight another French vessel, larger and better armed than their own. But the gallantry and resolution of gentlemen fighting for their wives and children, and the quiet courage of Christians trusting in the Lord, proved more than a match for the superior discipline and experience of the hired combatants. The king's vessel was forced to retire, and again our friends pursued their course, rejoicing in and praising the Lord who had appeared for their help against the mighty.

But the dangers from hostile vessels were not all they had to meet. They encountered terrible storms, and were driven far out of their course. Their provisions fell short, their water became bad, and sickness, that

* See Weiss's "History of Protestant Refugees."

usual accompaniment of bad and scanty food, and over-crowded cabins, was added to their other sorrows. Many a brave spirit was bowed down under the pain of seeing the sufferings of wife and child, which he was powerless to relieve. Many a tender heart was wrung to its inmost core, as she saw the waves close over the dead bodies of the husband and children, who were all the more dear to her for the sufferings they had borne together.

Our own particular friends had their full share of these sorrows. Of the party, Marie and Pauline were the only ones who escaped the distemper. All the others were more or less ill at the same time, and Marie and Pauline had to nurse them all.

This was Marie's darkest hour. Two of the Lajou children died, and the sight of their dying struggles, and of their dead bodies being committed to the deep, made Marie realize more fully the anguish which seemed to be in store for herself.

Theodore was fearfully ill. His strength was exhausted, while the fever continued unabated. There was no physician on board, no one who had ever seen this particular distemper before, or knew how it should be treated. There were no remedies to apply, no medicines to allay the fever or to soothe pain, no nourishing food or cordials to keep up the strength. Ah, the misery of sitting helpless, hopeless, by a sick-bed, where nothing can be done, nothing tried, but the approach of death must be watched without any measures being taken to save the loved one from his grasp.

And yet this was not the most bitter sting of Marie's affliction. That lay in the continued gloom of her husband's mind. He retained entire possession of his

senses, but seemed to retain them only that his misery might be thereby increased. No ray of light and comfort would his darkened mind entertain ; but with still, sullen despair, he watched the rapid approach of death, which must be to him the entrance into everlasting misery.

And now the end seemed very near. Marie had been striving all night to bring him peace, to make him see the fulness of Christ's salvation, the freeness of His grace ; and worn out by the sore conflict, she had retired for a few moments to relieve her feelings by giving way to them without restraint. She believed herself alone, but suddenly a small hand was laid on her bowed head, and Pauline said in a tone half of surprise and half of reproach—

“ Dear Marie, have you forgotten how much Christ loves you ? Why should you be so cast down while Christ is beside you ?”

Hardly realizing to whom she spoke, Marie poured out the sorrows of her over-burdened heart, and told her sister all her fears for her husband.

“ Ah !” said Pauline, with her placid smile, “ we must ask Jesus to see to this. We must tell Him all about poor Theodore, and He will help him.”

“ How do you know He will ?” Marie asked almost bitterly.

“ Because He loves to help the helpless.”

The words, so confidently spoken, struck Marie.

“ Pauline,” she said earnestly, “ will you go and say that to Theodore ?”

“ Say what, Marie ?”

“ That Jesus Christ loves to help the helpless ;” and soft tears rose to her eyes, as a fresh sense of her Saviour's tender compassion arose in her heart.

"To be sure I will, Marie; but first, Marie, let us ask God to make Theodore listen and believe."

Marie obeyed the impulse of her sister's hand. They knelt down together, and Pauline prayed as a child might have done—in simple words, and with full confidence of being heard. They went together to Theodore's bedside, Pauline stepped up to him, took his hand, and fixing her large blue eyes on his face, she said solemnly—

"Theodore, I have a message from God for you. Do you not know that Jesus loves to help the helpless?"

He gazed at her with a wistfulness that made Marie's heart bound with hope. At least he was beginning to entertain a doubt. He turned that same wistful gaze upon her as if asking for confirmation of the faint glimmer of hope.

"The Lord delighteth in mercy! He heareth the prayer of the destitute! He says, I come not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick," she said instantly.

"Ah, sick, sick indeed! the whole head sick—the whole heart faint," he said feebly, closing his eyes as if unable to bear the new light which was beginning to dawn upon him.

And in truth the beauty of that light, and the happiness it involved, were great stumbling-blocks to his receiving it. He had for so long nursed his despair, and taken a kind of perverse pleasure in making out his case as bad as possible, that it was difficult for him now to do anything else; and perhaps no other view of truth could have moved him; but this was exactly what he required. Now he began to look upon mercy not

merely as a gift too great to be given to a sinner like him, but as that in which the Lord delighted. He began to look upon his salvation, not merely as a happiness to himself, but as a glory to God. And his long continued unbelief was no longer in his eyes a source of misery to himself, a kind of just punishment for his great sin ; it was now a dishonouring of his Saviour, a slighting of His love, a limiting of His almighty power. Now he began to see how Christ might be more glorified by his pardon than by his condemnation ; and he was now able to take up many of the pleas of the Psalmist, to beg for mercy for God's glory's sake, to plead for pardon even on account of the greatness of his transgression.

It seemed as if the fever of his mind had kept up the fever of his body, for so soon as the one was quieted, the other began to abate. His recovery was slow—under the circumstances it could hardly have been otherwise. Nature may be a very good physician, but in Theodore's case she had no fair play. When she had provided him with recovered appetite, there was neither sufficient nor wholesome food wherewith to supply it. And when she had sent langour and drowsiness in aid of her prescription of quiet and sleep, a tossing creaking vessel, the suppressed groans of suffering companions, the more open complaints of poor starving children, or the irrepressible grief of those whom death had bereaved of their nearest and dearest, all combined to thwart her good intentions, and to leave her patient sleepless and unrefreshed.

In rate of progress, mind and body kept fair pace. It was only by slow degrees that Theodore would admit light and comfort into his mind. It was only by

slow degrees that he would suffer them to brighten and strengthen into that sure confidence which the Lord saw was necessary for the trying life before him. But even from the first, the great point was gained, when he was made to see that presumption lay, not in accepting, but in refusing that which the Lord freely gave, and that the best atonement he could make for his great sin, was to allow the Lord to get the glory of giving him a full and free salvation. Starting from this point, his progress might be slow, but it must be sure.

Of all the mercies Marie had received from the Lord since leaving home, none was so great as this. All trials and anxieties seemed light now that the great anxiety about her husband's salvation was removed. And no discomfort, no privation seemed worth a moment's thought, now that she could see him receiving everything with cheerful submission, as from a loving Father's hands, now that they were able to lighten each other's burdens, to support each other's strength by a return to their old habit of communing together of the Lord's goodness and grace, of praying together for His support, and of praising Him together for all His mercies. Marie had hardly realized how bitterly she had felt the loss of this during the last two years, until now when she felt the full joy and comfort of its restoration.

Theodore took especial pleasure, as body and mind grew stronger, in returning with Marie all the way by which the Lord had led them, and in marking that His temporal mercies to them were such a precious type of the love, care, and tender watchfulness, with which He had led his soul through the dreary wilderness of unbelief, into the fair land of faith and confidence. He

often dwelt with especial pleasure upon Marie's frequent experience of the truth of the promise, "He shall cover thee with His feathers, and under His wings shalt thou trust," and he used to say that nothing could so well describe his own feelings when he was brought to trust in Christ's full salvation as this, that he had been made to know what it was to hide himself under the shadow of his Saviour's wings.

As might have been expected under the circumstances, Theodore's strength was still very small when they arrived in America; and in all the fatigues of their landing and moving to their place of settlement, Marie had to take care of and support him rather than receive support from him. But the lightness, the joyfulness of her heart at the change in his feelings carried her through all, and even enabled her to keep up her spirits and cheerfulness under the darkness of their future prospects.

Dark indeed they were, and many and sore were the sufferings through which the little colony passed, during the first six or eight months of their settlement. They had chosen what is now South Carolina, for their new home. Fertile as the land is now, one can hardly fancy what it was when the Huguenot settlers first took possession. Where our friends located themselves the whole ground seemed only a succession of swamps from the overflowing of the river. And to drain these swamps, to clear spaces for cultivation in the impenetrable forests, there was only a band of men, for the most part unused to manual labour, and now sorely weakened by starvation and disease.

But the Huguenots were a strong-hearted, persevering people. No time was lost in useless murmurs.

Each man set manfully to work, to do what he could, and each and all looked confidently to the Lord for help and blessing. Their trials and privations were sweetened by mutual sympathy and kindness, and lightened (ah! who can tell how much?) by simple trust in the love and power of Him who ordered all things for them, of Him who doeth all things well.

The want of provisions was the sorest burden they had to bear. Their vessel had brought out so many passengers, that they had been obliged to abandon their first purpose of carrying out with them stores for their maintenance in their new country, while the crops they must sow were coming up. And they had been forced to trust to merchant vessels which promised to follow them, and to bring supplies for their wants. So irregular was the arrival of these vessels, that for many months our poor colonists hardly ever knew the comfort of a full meal. And many, and many a trying week was passed, during which the supply of food for each day was hardly enough to sustain life, and far, very far from being enough to strengthen the workers for the hard work they had to accomplish. But as I said before, bravely and patiently did they bear it all, helping and clinging to each other in kind, unselfish love, and resting trustingly on the Lord, into whose hands they had given themselves, and all dear to them.

This peaceful trust in God was the great thing which enabled them to bear up under all their sufferings. But for it, both health and spirits must have given way. Of this they were fully aware, and gratefully did they acknowledge the Lord's love in upholding their spirits as He had guarded their bodies from their enemies, and in leading their hearts to faith, confidence, and peace,

even as He had guided them through all their long and perilous journeys.

The fortitude and cheerful patience of the women were above all affecting and admirable. Many of them were women of high rank, accustomed to every luxury, to be surrounded with crowds of attendants, to have everything done for them, even to the moving of their chair, or the carrying of their reticule. And yet here they were now, acting the part of true settlers' wives or daughters, helping their fathers and husbands in their rough work, teaching themselves, or learning from whoever could teach them, all the arts and devices of household economy, by which they could contribute to the comfort of their families.

Marie and Pauline had as much to do as any, perhaps more than most. At the time of landing, not one of the three males of the party had recovered the strength they had lost in their long illness. And even Jeanne, usually so indefatigable and efficient, was then so weak that she was fit for nothing but sitting in some sheltered corner, watching the children, keeping them out of mischief, or directing them in their efforts at usefulness, and now and then, perhaps, indulging herself in fretting at her own uselessness, and at seeing Marie and Pauline labouring beyond their strength at tasks wholly unsuited for them, lifting heavy burdens, or handling tools all unfit for their small delicate hands.

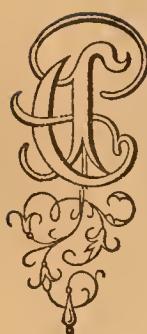
Pauline worked as hard as any; and if her head was not always very wise to direct herself or others, her hands were most ready and skilful to execute. And her childlike contentment and gaiety made her a real source of comfort to the family, as her simple child-like faith made her often their teacher and example.

One small log-hut was, for many months, made to suffice for both families. And very grateful they were to get its shelter before the cold of winter became quite insupportable. The shelter of bare walls it was, in literal truth, for furniture was a luxury not to be thought of, while so many more important matters pressed upon the time and attention of all. One can hardly fancy the delight all felt, the first night they slept on beds woven by Pauline's dexterous fingers, out of the long coarse grass and rushes which the children brought her from the marshes. And when Bernard, the most ingenious of the party, found time to make a rude table, and one or two chairs, they made quite a family fête of the occasion, and laughingly declared that never had table or chairs been so prized before.

Were no thoughts sent back to Blancard, with its lofty halls, its splendid suite of rooms as splendidly furnished, its noble park, its extensive pleasure-grounds, and pleasant gardens? When such thoughts did occur, as occur they must, regret was hardly the feeling they excited. The last twelve months in that once happy home had been so imbibited by the relentless system of espionage under which they had lived, by the gloom of poor Theodore's darkened mind, and by all the anxious thoughts of the future, that Marie could never think of them without a shudder, and without realizing all the preciousness of present freedom of thought and action. While to Theodore, his restoration to God's favour and blessing had brought such an ever-flowing spring of happiness, had shed such a bright light round his daily path, that regret for anything in the past was to him an impossibility.

CHAPTER XIX.

A MEETING.



OURAGE, my boy, we are near the end now; but the journey has been too much for you. I wish I had left you behind with our friends." So said one of three travellers, who were making their way through the tangled forest, bordering the settlement to which more than four years ago we conducted our French friends. The person addressed was a tall, handsome boy about fifteen. He turned with a bright smile to his comrade as he answered—

"Leave me behind? How could you have done it? How could I have stayed? And as to fatigue, see, I can beat you yet," and he passed the first speaker and went on in front, first looking back and laughing in boyish triumph. Fatigued as he was, his step was light and elastic, and spoke of limbs inured to exercise, as plainly as did his handsome brown cheek of free exposure to sun and wind.

The third member of the party was an Indian, with all the characteristics of his race. Although much less fatigued than his companions, the stillness and indifference of his demeanour were strongly contrasted with their eager, ever anxious interest, as they glanced incessantly from side to side, or strove to pierce through

the leafy screen in front, impatient to catch the first glimpse of the object of their pursuit.

And who are these two companions of the Indian? Ah, I can read in the sparkling eyes of my young friends that the answer is unnecessary. Yes, you are right, they are Hubert and Eugène. Kindly and hospitably as the exiles had been treated by the Indians, and heartily as they enjoyed the freedom of their forest life, as contrasted with what might have been their position in the convict settlement, still we cannot but suppose that a life among barbarians was not altogether to the taste of cultivated, highly educated men, as most of them were. We cannot but suppose that they longed for renewed intercourse with men of like habits, pursuits, and education as themselves, that their heart thirsted for intelligence from their native land—that land still so dear, in spite of all they had suffered in it,—or intelligence of their brother Huguenots, and above all for intelligence of the many nearest and dearest whom they had left behind, and of whose fate they were completely ignorant.

So long as such deprivations seemed unavoidable, they bore them patiently and cheerfully; but when they came to understand from our old friend Foam-of-the-Sea, that a journey to the settled parts of North America was at least possible, then their longings increased in strength until they were irresistible, and to attempt the journey was at last determined upon.

Between the forming the resolution and the putting it in practice, a long interval occurred. They found that their Indian hosts were beginning to feel interested in that religion which they saw exercised so much influence over their white brothers, which made them so

happy, so strong to endure, so diligent to labour, so honest, true, and kind. And Hubert and his companions could not leave those to whom they were so much indebted, without at least trying to give them a saving knowledge of the truth. So for months, nay for years, they waited on, patiently labouring and praying with all diligence and fervency, until they saw such fruit of their labours as made it appear safe to leave the work to other hands.

The Indians were not even then to be left to themselves. A good many of the exiles were too infirm, either from age or ill health, to brave the dangers and toils of such an expedition. It was only the strong who could undertake it; and even of those who did set out, a goodly number were discouraged by one week's experience, lost heart, and returned to their late homes. The others persevered, and through much danger, fatigue, and sore privation, reached a small Dutch settlement about twenty miles from the one in which their countrymen were located.

There they were most hospitably and kindly received, and provided with every comfort and refreshment their exhausted frames could desire. Here too, they learned for the first time of the arrival of their brother Huguenots on these shores. The enterprising French and the persevering Dutch had made a kind of path through the thick forests dividing the two settlements, for the mutual convenience of buying, selling, or exchanging; and a party of friendly Indians were ready to shew the strangers this path, and lead them to the French colony.

With many of the worn-out travellers, however, the perfect comfort of their one night's rest seemed to make

them more conscious of their fatigue, and when the following morning dawned, few were able to set out with Hubert and Eugène, who could not resolve to delay another day before seeking their friends.

Perhaps the strength of their hope was one cause of their greater strength of body. Most of the exiles were wholly ignorant of the history of the friends they had left in France, but Hubert and Eugène had heard that their friends had gone, or at least had been on the way to Holland, and had been informed of their own destination to the West Indies. This colony had come from Holland, and their hope was strong that their own family would form part of it. Upheld by such a hope, they had struggled on through the day, and now at the time of sunset were very near the object of their wishes.

And now the Indian has led them out of the forest, and shewing them the houses of their countrymen, has received their thanks, and returned to pass the night in the silent woods, a more pleasant resting-place to him than could be any habitation of man. The exiles stand alone on a high ridge overlooking the whole settlement.

How changed is the scene since we last looked on it ! The river, no longer the cause of deformity and mischief, is now one of the fairest features in the landscape. The annual floods which used to devastate the whole plain, are now no longer dreaded. Here high banks force the stream to keep its proper limits. There, judiciously planned, devious canals tempt it to bestow its super-abundant waters in directions always harmless, and often beneficial.

Instead of dreary swamps, we see now fields of corn in all their bright spring green, meadows of luxuriant

hay, and sunny pasture lands, where the well-fed, well-kept cattle are enjoying themselves to the utmost.

The small log-huts are changed into comfortable, and for the most part, very pretty farm-houses, with verandas covered with creepers of varied form and hue, with substantial barns, cow-houses, and cattle-sheds for the accommodation of that same grain and hay, and those same stately kine whose acquaintance we made in the meadows.

Herds of matronly-looking cows were being driven home for the evening milking. Housewives flitted to and fro from cow-house to dairy, from granary to poultry-yard, and children sported and shouted on the banks of the river, or among the green knolls and blooming orchards. Everything looked bright and happy in the light of the setting sun. Our two travellers stood still and silent—their hearts were too full for speech, too full for action. They stood leaning on each other, gazing on the scene, as if of gazing they could never have enough.

One house especially attracted their attention. It was nearer them than any other, and both in architecture and situation was the most beautiful of any. The ground sloped gently up from the river to the edge of the forest. The house had been built near the top of the hill, commanding a fine view of the whole valley. The wood swept round two sides of the little homestead, affording shelter from many a cold blast, and forming a fine back-ground to the bright-looking cottage, with its white window-curtains, its gaily painted doors and shutters, and its picturesque tasteful verandah. A large garden, well stocked with fruit, flowers, and vegetables, lay down the sunny slope in front, and on one

side an orchard, now sheeted with its pink and white blossoms, stretched down to the water's edge.

There was something so attractive, so homelike, and peaceful in the whole scene, that the travellers could not turn their eyes from it. Just because it was more beautiful and tasteful than any other, a vague fancy possessed them that it must be the home they sought—the home of those dearest to them.

All was very quiet about the house. A sturdy woman, followed by two girls, each bearing a milk-pail, crossed the farm-yard behind ; but they were the only people that were seen. There was a little more stir at the bottom of the garden. An elderly, or perhaps I might say an old man, was digging up a bed with vigorous strokes, which spoke of a hale old age, of sturdy arms, and hearty will. A girl of about eleven sported round him, now affecting to help him, by endeavouring with her small spade to break down the stiff clods he threw up, now darting off to visit a favourite flower and shrub, and again returning to tease a chubby little boy about three years old, who was raking the gravel walk with as much grave determination and diligence as if the welfare of the whole family had depended on his exertions.

It was with a strange kind of interest that Hubert and Eugène watched these children. They were too distant to be able to distinguish their features ; but yet they half fancied that they could recognise them.

“ Surely these are Hortense and Theodore,” Eugène cried, after a few minutes’ silent observation. “ Dear little fellow, he must be running about by this time.”

“ Dear Eugène, have you forgotten what the Baron de Raynal told you ?”

"Ah yes!" he recollects now, and shuddered at the recollection of his baby brother's death.

"These cannot be our people, then," he said, as sadly as if his hopes had centred in this one house.

"Why not?" was Hubert's cheerful answer. "There may have been arrivals of which we know nothing. This may be another little brother whom God has given you to fill Theodore's place. Let us move a little nearer, that we may see them better."

They did so, keeping on the heights that they might not lose sight of the cottage and garden. They had not taken many steps before their ears were caught with the sound of music in the forest before them. It was a chorus of manly voices. They sung the refrain of an old well-known French song. The heart of Hubert thrilled at the sound. Scenes crowded on his memory in which he had heard and borne a part in that old refrain. Where now were those voices which had then joined with his? And how much had passed since then! The sounds came nearer. They could distinguish the words. It was the song of hunters returning home, and was evidently intended as a signal of their approach to the home circles expecting them.

Now the singers come out of the wood,—about a dozen men bearing guns, a dead deer or two, some birds, and other implements and trophies of the chase. They separate, some to one hand, some to another, but all down to the valley except one, who turns to the cottage on the hill. He is a handsome man, and even in that simple hunter's garb there is something aristocratic in his carriage and motions. The travellers look after him eagerly, breathlessly.

"Is it Theodore?" "Is it papa?" burst from their

lips at the same moment. But the questions cannot be answered. He walks in the shade, and keeps his head so determinately turned to his home, that his face cannot be seen.

To that home the eyes of our exiles are also turned. What a pleasant family group comes out to greet the father and husband! A young girl is the first; she stands in the porch, her eyes eagerly looking up the hill, while the practised fingers make the bright knitting needles go through their rapid evolutions. Now she is sure he is coming. The work is cast aside, and she runs joyfully out to meet him. But a cry of distress arrests her steps. The children in the garden have left their old friend, and are toiling up the hill, that they too may meet papa. The impatient little girl drags on the toddling child too fast, he stumbles, falls, and his wail of mingled fright and disappointment reaches the more sober, elder sister's ears. She cannot disregard it. She must give up the hope of getting papa's first kiss. She hastens down the path to lift up and comfort the fallen.

And now two elder members of the family come into view. One, a small, slight, fairy-looking form, with golden curls hanging on her neck and shoulders. The other darker, taller, more matronly, with a baby in her arms. They reach the gate just as the father has set down the child who had first reached him. He takes the eager, springing baby, and lifts him, crowing and laughing, high above his head. The mother stands, looking up at them, proudly, happily. The setting sun falls full upon her up-turned face. At once her boy recognises those eyes so full of love, that gentle, beaming smile. He quits his uncle's arm, and darts forward. Breath-

less with haste, choked with the fulness of joy, hardly can he send forth the eager words, "Mother, mother!"

At that wild, passionate cry, all look round. He has reached them and thrown himself on his mother's neck. She cannot think, cannot reason; she only feels, that her own boy, so long lost, is once again in her arms. She sees not her brother's approach, she sees only those dark eyes looking so lovingly into hers, raining hot tears of happiness on her face and neck; she hears not Pauline's glad, and yet calm greeting to Hubert, nor Theodore's exclamations of surprise; she hears only that low, oft-repeated murmur, "Mother, my mother, my own mother!" She is clinging to him more than he to her; he has grown so tall, so strong, and manly; and she trembles so much, that she could not stand, were it not for his support; but yet she hardly understands why she trembles, hardly realizes what makes her so happy.

It is her husband's voice speaks in her ear, and wakes her from that trance of deep over-flowing joy.

"Dear Marie," he says, "am I not to see our boy?" and recalled to herself, she unclasps her arms from him, and with a relieving burst of tears gives him to his father. And now she has time and thought to give to the other arrival, and Hubert gets his share of the joyful greeting.

The little girls have shrunk back half-frightened. They cannot think that tall man is their own Eugène, and are more inclined to acknowledge Hubert than him. Their uncle is the least changed of the two. And Eugène laughs to think that he had half-feared the dancing fairy he saw in the garden was too old for Hortense, whom now he has to kiss as the little Aimée

he remembers so tiny, so babyish. And he looks admiringly at the graceful figure, and sweet, blushing, modest face of his elder sister.

And the little three-year-old Hubert begins to murmur a little because papa has never once looked to him. And baby echoes his complaints in louder, more vociferous, if less intelligible, strains. And Bernard comes up from his digging, with a vague hope that the arrival which causes so much emotion may be his own Master Eugène ; and cannot find words to express his admiration of the boy's growth, of his fine, open, manly face, and well-knit vigorous limbs. And Jeanne Lajou, who has finished her milking, and has in some mysterious manner gained an inkling of the truth, despatches her two girls on twenty different errands, all bearing upon the magnificent supper she means to provide for such welcome visitors. And herself sees that the parlour fire is bright enough, and cheery enough for so joyful an occasion.

And now the happy party come in, the strangers looking admiringly at everything, with eyes long unused to the luxuries and comforts of civilized life. They are shown into a large cheerful parlour, not only comfortably but prettily furnished. True, all the articles are home-made. But Marie's taste, and Bernard's ingenuity and skill, have combined to produce admirable results.

It is with curiously mingled feelings that the wanderers look round. It is pleasant to return to the habits of civilized life. But to Hubert especially, that return has called up such a host of recollections of old scenes, and old friends he can never see again, that the pleasure is not unmixed with sadness.

And now a large Bible meets their eyes. How eagerly they seize it! How fondly they dwell upon each word! They ask it from each other repeatedly, that they may with their own hands turn over the precious pages, with their own eyes read this one or that other passage of the many with which memory has often comforted and refreshed their souls.

“Ah, what it is to have a Bible of my own once again!” Hubert says, as he clasps the one Marie has silently put into his hands.

“But God spoke with His voice when you had not His written word,” Pauline asserts in her quiet confident manner.

“Yes, spoke to me in the memory of these precious words,” he answered gratefully. “I did not know before how much of it I could repeat. It was as if the Lord Himself opened fresh stores in my memory each day.”

Now supper comes in. Such a supper! Zealous affection, joyful care have presided in its preparation, and it is such as no mere hireling could have produced in the time and circumstances. Bernard and Pierre Lajou bring it in. The Lajous have now an establishment of their own. But their affection and veneration for their former master and mistress continue unabated. Jeanne still insists upon performing all the tasks she thinks too heavy or disagreeable for Marie and Pauline. And Pierre spends in Theodore’s garden and fields many hours, of which Theodore knows nothing. It was Jeanne who prepared the many savoury viands with which the table is spread. And it is she and her eldest girl who now come in to carry off the two little boys to bed, that the elders may have the more peace to talk.

Of crockery the colony cannot yet boast. But these wooden bowls and platters are Bernard's handiwork, and by their varied, picturesque, and sometimes fantastic carving, afford more amusement and pleasure than the finest service of china could have done.

The room is lighted only by the bright crackling wood-fire. But its cheerful dancing illumination is so home-like, so well suited to the scene and to their happy hearts, that they do not miss candle or lamp.

The outward accessories of their happiness I may describe, but how tell of that ever-flowing spring of joy in their hearts? how count up the many ingredients of which it is composed? how weigh the gratitude and love with which parent and child, brother and sisters, look on each other's faces, and thank the Lord who has brought them together again? How do each in turn become narrator and listener! How do hearts beat quick, and eyes fill at the tale of danger and sufferings! How, with a long relieving breath, do all come back to the consciousness that they are now together in that home of peace and rest!

But even such happy communion must come to an end. The weary travellers must go to rest; Bernard is called in, and with his family round him Theodore opens the Bible, and reads the 107th Psalm. How do their hearts follow every word—how cordially do they bear witness, by their own experience, of the Lord's readiness to hear and save His people!—and when the last words are read, as by a common and irresistible impulse, every voice is raised to repeat the words, “the loving-kindness of the Lord.”

Ah, how much had each known of that loving-kindness! His loving-kindness to Hubert, strong in faith,

firm in principle, who had been so continually sustained in every trial and every sorrow, that his joy in the Lord had never wavered. His loving-kindness to Theodore, forgiving his backsliding, watching over him in his wanderings from the right road, and through all his long night of despondency and unbelief, and recalling him at last to the knowledge of Himself. His loving-kindness to Bernard, grown grey in ungodliness, leading him so lovingly to Himself, and giving him such a full measure of peace. His loving-kindness to Marie, the gentle, clinging woman, loosening her from all earthly support, only to make her lean the more fully and trustingly on Himself, giving strength to her weakness, and to her fearfulness courage, and so tenderly and continually caring for her safety. His loving-kindness to Eugène, manifesting Himself to him in his loneliness, taking him in His arms, carrying him in His bosom, being to him father, mother, and sister. His loving-kindness to Pauline, whose quiet, resting faith stood in so little need of the teaching of trials, whose weak intellect could so little have profited by such teaching, and who had therefore been so tenderly sheltered from much that the others had borne, so lovingly cared for and protected. His loving-kindness to the timid Hortense, to the giddy, high-spirited Aimée, in that the one had been taught trust and confidence by the kindness she met with, the other had been aroused to thought by the perils she had passed through. Ah! surely well might their hearts swell, as again and again these words were repeated by every voice, “The loving-kindness of the Lord—the loving-kindness of the Lord!”

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